Commentary
July-August 2003

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Robert H. Bork

The Chinese Sickness
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Judaism Beyond Words: Conclusion
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The Morality of War
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On Discovering Bada Shanren
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CONTROVERSY

A Scientific Scandal?
David Berlinski & Critics

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Commentary
July-August 2003

Letters from Readers

Containing Iraq

To the Editor:

I commend Robert J. Lieber for grappling with the difficult issue of containment ["The Folly of Containment," April]. It was the crux of the debate about the war in Iraq and should have been discussed extensively in Congress. His points, however, are not convincing.

Mr. Lieber argues that "Iraq's record of systematic deception and noncompliance" rendered any attempt at containment futile. But Mr. Lieber cannot possibly know this. Stepped-up, long-term weapons inspections could have successfully reduced, if not eliminated, the military threat posed by Saddam Hussein. Instead of treating containment as a practical issue, Mr. Lieber categorically denies its feasibility.

He uses a-priori argumentation again when he remarks that "a long-term, massive military presence in the region exerting a credible threat of force" was not "in the least conceivable." If spending $70 billion on the war was manageable, one wonders why keeping Iraq surrounded by a large international coalition of military forces would have been impossible.

Mr. Lieber's next argument against the possibility of containment concerns "Saddam's character and the record of his behavior." Both, we are led to believe, were exceptionally bad. But history books are full of stories about erratic butchers whose ambitions—even if grandiose—were rarely global. The fact that Saddam admired Hitler betrays the Iraqi's limitations: he had neither the Nazi dictator's goals nor his military strength. Saddam had regional ambitions, and the threat he posed was exaggerated.

Finally, Mr. Lieber claims that since 9/11 "we are no longer in the realm of contingent scenarios." Therefore, he continues, "there is a clear and legitimate right to take decisive action without waiting to be absolutely certain that . . . an attack is about to be unleashed." This justification of preemptive strikes opens a Pandora's box. We are fortunate that Mr. Lieber does not advise the Indian or Pakistani governments, whose heated verbal exchanges and military skirmishes over Kashmir could easily escalate into a nuclear confrontation.

Mr. Lieber cannot compellingly make the case for the war against Iraq—nor could the Bush team.

Udo Nattermann
Bloomington, Indiana

To the Editor:

Robert J. Lieber argues that Saddam Hussein was irrational and unpredictable, and therefore could not be contained by the threat of military action. As "proof" of this irrationality, Mr. Lieber notes that Hussein started two wars, attacked both his own people and the Iranians with chemical weapons, and generally behaved in an evil manner. Yet none of this bothered American administrations until Iraq managed to threaten our oil supply. Only then did we become genuinely concerned. Saddam Hussein was no more irrational than most dictators, and his long reign, distasteful as we may have found it, testified to his shrewdness rather than to his irrationality.

Mr. Lieber also states that Saddam threatened his neighbors. But all of Iraq's neighbors were resolutely against the war, except Kuwait and Israel. The great majority of those living in Saddam's neighborhood did not share the fear of him that seemed to have overwhelmed Washington, half a world away. A dispassionate analysis of Saddam's Iraq would show that, at the time we went to war, the threat was minimal—a conclusion confirmed by the ra-

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pidity and ease of our military victory.

Mr. Lieber next points to the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that Saddam supposedly possessed. Yet no WMD have turned up. Each time something is found by our troops, it is trumpeted on television as the "smoking gun" that ostensibly will justify the war—only to be debunked later as another mistake. The evidence seems to indicate that the Iraqi WMD program had been very small of late, if it existed at all.

Finally, Mr. Lieber rather naively confuses Saddam's attempts at obfuscation, subterfuge, and cheating with the failure of containment. Of course Saddam lied: he was not a nice guy, which is why we were containing him in the first place. The fact remains that, for the last ten years, containment had been effective: Saddam had been involved in no military action, his relations with neighbors had been reasonable, and his WMD programs had been greatly scaled back or stopped altogether.

So was containment "too costly," as Mr. Lieber would have us believe? Clearly, the cost of the war and subsequent multi-year occupation will eclipse the costs of maintaining the no-fly zones and keeping some troops in the region.

DIMITRY ZARKH
Waltham, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

A nuclear Iraq, as Robert J. Lieber writes, would indeed be dangerous. But nuclear technology takes decades to acquire and perfect. Pakistan needed 27 years to develop its nuclear capacity, and India more than 30. There is no credible evidence attesting to the existence of an Iraqi nuclear-weapons program, and UNMOVIC predicted that without inspections and sanctions Iraq would have required at least seven years to achieve such a program. This issue could have been adequately tackled with the reinforcement of inspections and sanctions. One cannot reject an option without adequately trying it.

YAQOOB K. BANGASH
South Bend, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR:

Robert J. Lieber's article is an outstanding study of the problems of trying to deal with Saddam Hussein by containment. But the comparison to the use of containment against the Soviet Union deserves more attention. That policy, put into practice in 1947 by President Truman, took 44 years to bring about the downfall of the Soviet Union. Would a 44-year containment of Iraq have been any cheaper in lives or treasure than the short, violent application of American military force?

Containment worked to bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union in large part by economic means; the Soviets had little to sell to the West. Iraq, by contrast, has the second largest known reserves of petroleum, and the West has an insatiable thirst for oil. Even under international sanctions, Iraq continued to export a limited amount of oil legally. It undoubtedly also sold additional oil in violation of the sanctions, probably by transshipment of its oil via Iran, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Was there any real chance of bringing Iraq to economic collapse?

North Korea, on the other hand, resembles the Soviet Union: it still clings to a Communist economic system that has brought its people to the brink of starvation, and it exports nothing of any interest, with the exception of weapons of mass destruction. Containment, which could include stopping any North Korean ship carrying a weapon of mass destruction, may well be a viable policy for dealing with that country.

ELLIOT I. SUSSER
Eastport, New York

ROBERT J. LIEBER writes:

In "The Folly of Containment," I argued that containment of Iraq was no longer viable and that alternatives to the use of force were based on wishful thinking. The article was written on the eve of war. In it, I also noted that if we failed to win quickly, critics of military action would claim vindication, but even if things went quite well, many would assert that the same result could have been achieved without force of arms.

In the event, the war did go quickly and well. (The postwar situation has not yet gone so smoothly, but that was not the point of my article.) None of the widely predicted disasters came to pass. There was no Vietnam-style quagmire, coalition forces suffered fewer casualties than in the Gulf war of 1991, Saddam's vaunted Republican Guard was quickly overcome, Baghdad did not become Stalingrad-on-the-Tigris, the Iraqi population did not rise up to defend the regime, Saddam did not attack our forces with weapons of mass destruction (WMD), we did not inflict massive civilian casualties, Iraq's cities and civilian infrastructure were not destroyed, the Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis did not erupt in campaigns of ethnic slaughter, the war did not produce a mass exodus of refugees, Israel was not struck by Scud missiles or by biological or chemical weapons, Turkish troops did not intervene, there was no uprising of the Arab or Islamic "street," and moderate regimes in the region were not overthrown.

Nevertheless, Udo Nattermann, Dimitry Zarkh, and Yaqoob K. Bangash now ask whether, in retrospect, containment and inspections might have sufficed. The answer once again is no. Mr. Nattermann's claim that stepped up, long-term weapons inspections "could have successfully reduced, if not eliminated, the military threat posed by Saddam Hussein" ignores the record of twelve years of steadily eroding inspections and sanctions as well as the progressive disintegration of the international coalition that had supported the earlier war to oust Iraq from Kuwait. His insistence that a long-term, massive, military presence in the region could have been sustained, as well as a large international coalition, flies in the face of political realities as well as military force requirements elsewhere. Besides, prior to the Bush administration's buildup, France, Russia, and China had been pushing to ease or end UN inspections and sanctions altogether, not to strengthen and enforce them more rigorously.

Nor, contrary to Mr. Nattermann, was Saddam's threat to his neighbors by

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any means exaggerated. Over the years, the Iraqi dictator had launched invasions of two of them (Iran and Kuwait), attacked Israel and Saudi Arabia with missiles, threatened to "burn half of Israel," and bemoaned the fact that he had not had nuclear weapons with which to deter the U.S. before invading Kuwait.

The issue of India and Pakistan is a red herring. Over the past half-century, those two countries have fought three major wars for reasons that have had nothing to do with the U.S. Whether they manage to mitigate their rivalry or instead escalate the conflict has everything to do with their own agendas and leadership.

Dimitry Zarkh wrongly attributes to me the argument that Saddam was irrational. Instead, I was careful to write that Saddam had by his actions demonstrated repeatedly that he was reckless and a gambler. Deterrence theory rests on the assumption that one's adversary is a calculating and value-maximizing rational actor. Saddam's record, his behavior, and his shoot-the-messenger attitude toward disagreeable advice amply suggested that this assumption could not be relied upon. Nor was it the case, as Mr. Zarkh asserts, that all of Iraq's neighbors except Kuwait and Israel were resolutely against the war. All of them had good reason to welcome Saddam's downfall; what they feared, based on past experience, was that if Saddam once again survived they would be left to face his wrath. Though in some cases covertly, every one of the countries of the Arabian peninsula collaborated with the U.S. during the run-up to the war. The Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan hosted U.S. forces, and even Iran cooperated to the extent of agreeing in advance that it would return any downed pilots.

As for the "missing" weapons of mass destruction, it is well to remember that Saddam, who gave up as much as $180 billion in oil revenues rather than comply with UN disarmament requirements, had eight years of experience in concealing his facilities from UNSCOM and an additional four years to perfect his techniques after the inspectors were withdrawn in 1998. Iraq is a very large country, the size of France, and those who might reveal WMD locations were intimidated by a regime that had repeatedly imposed the most fearsome punishments on anyone even remotely suspected of disloyalty. This threat will not disappear until the large numbers of Baath-party thugs are rendered harmless.

Yaqoob K. Bangash questions the risks posed by an Iraqi nuclear program—or even its existence. Noting that it takes decades to acquire and perfect this technology, he cites the figures of 27 years for Pakistan and 30 for India. But by that standard there are no grounds for complacency. Saddam, with an ambitious nuclear program that began in the mid-to-late 1970's, was already at the quarter-century mark. In the early 1990's, UNSCOM discovered that Iraq's nuclear program vastly exceeded even the most alarmed estimates of outside experts and intelligence services. Saddam did lack the needed fissile material—as I noted in my article—but, had he succeeded in acquiring this from the former Soviet Union or from Pakistan or North Korea, he was capable of going nuclear within less than a year.

Elliot I. Susser thoughtfully raises a number of longer-term issues and comparisons, particularly with regard to North Korea. Whether containment can work as a means of dealing with that country remains to be seen. It is quite true, as Mr. Susser says, that the regime exports nothing of value except weapons—but therein lies the risk. The September 11 attacks demonstrated the profoundly lethal danger the U.S. now faces. A North Korean regime willing and able to sell nuclear technology, components, or even a complete weapon represents a very grave threat indeed. It is conceivable that pressure (and inducements) by the U.S., especially if supported by China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea, could lead to the dismantling of Pyongyang's program. But if not, the efficacy of containment will have been rather dramatically placed in doubt.

Fuzzy Theology

TO THE EDITOR:

Although I have great respect for Hillel Halkin and frequently agree with him, his analysis of the Conservative movement's new Bible, *Etz Hayim*, is yet another instance of secular impatience with liberal religion ["'Boiling a Kid': Reflections on a New Bible Commentary," April]. One can debate the question of ritual, but I find it annoying when secular Jews like Mr. Halkin are unwilling to tolerate non-Orthodox religious theory or practice. As the old joke would have it, he wants the shul he does not attend to be Orthodox.

Thus, when the question of incremental observance of the dietary laws comes up, Mr. Halkin ridicules the idea of starting with abstention from pork, moving to rejection of cheeseburgers, and ending with a "fuzzy" regimen of kashrut observance. But even from the viewpoint of strict Orthodox halakha, this approach, while not exactly commendable, is valid. Similarly, when the question of the historicity of the sojourn of the Jews in ancient Egypt arises, Mr. Halkin regards the Conservative position—that since there is no solid evidence for Exodus, but also no evidence against it, a Jew may feel comfortable believing it—as an unacceptable compromise.

Seventy years ago, Mordecai Kaplan accused his academic colleagues and fellow doubters of rejecting Reconstructionism not because they found its reasoning faulty, but because they preferred religion to remain unbelievable and impractical so they could be free of any form of it that might demand their effort and loyalty.

RABBI JACOB CHINITZ
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

Though I agree with Hillel Halkin's characterization of Conservative Judaism as "a movement of inconsistency and compromise not just at the practical but at the highest intellectual level," he is wrong to denigrate the incremental observance of

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Torah law. Although it is wrong for the Conservative movement to institutionalize the idea that one may choose which commandments one wishes to observe, it is often necessary for an individual Jew to approach Torah observance in just this way. To make a Jew feel like a hypocrite because he has not fully observed all the laws would only cause him to despair of ever becoming Torah-observant. To demand an all-or-nothing approach would be asking for failure.

SHELDON ROTHMAN
Far Rockaway, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin offers a superb analysis of the faultlines—indeed fissures—in the Conservative movement as illumined by the *Etz Hayim* commentary. But there is a small, though hardly trivial, factual error in his useful contribution. In describing the Conservative movement as lurching between American Orthodoxy and Reform without a clear theological position of its own, he notes that it was precisely this dynamic that was at the root of the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in 1866.

The facts are quite other. Far from being a Conservative response to Orthodoxy, as Mr. Halkin suggests, the founding of JTS was in point of fact an "Orthodox" response to Reform, then the regnant American Jewish religion. (Indeed, as the Reformers themselves put it in the title of their prayer book, Reform was nothing less than *Minhag America*, the American religious tradition.) The famous "treif banquet" honoring the first graduating class of the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College in 1883 and the passage of the "Pittsburgh platform" two years later (which codified the radical theology of American Reform Judaism) galvanized the traditional leadership into establishing a training ground for traditional American rabbis.

Alas, the early JTS was weak, and it was only with the arrival on the scene of Solomon Schechter in the first decade of the new century that the Seminary began thinking and acting as Hillel Halkin says it did.

JEROME A. CHANES
Barnard College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Hillel Halkin is certainly correct when he writes, "Compromise is often messy and rarely satisfying, but it is the stuff of life." The problem—or failure—of the Conservative movement is that it institutionalizes compromise ab initio—*l'hatkhilah*, in Talmudic terms—rather than accepting it post-facto—*b'diavad*.

Frankly, after reading Mr. Halkin's review of *Etz Hayim*, I am more convinced than ever that Conservative Judaism is nothing more than a confused and inter-

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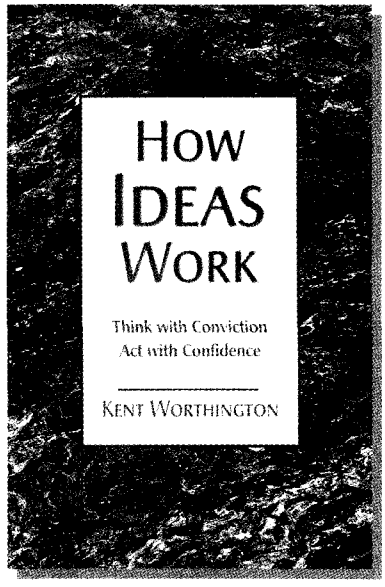

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nally contradictory way-station on the road to Reform Judaism. Even if their adherents sometimes compromise, Orthodox and Reform Judaism are at least internally consistent.

RABBI MILTON H. POLIN
Jerusalem, Israel

HILLEL HALKIN writes:

Although Rabbi Jacob Chinitz is wrong in thinking that I care what the shuls I do not attend are like, I confess to feeling more at home in the shuls I sometimes do attend when they are Orthodox. In part this has to do with how I was raised, but it is also a response to what strikes me as being Orthodoxy's greater integrity in many things.

The "incremental observance" legitimized by Conservatism is one of these things. Contrary to Sheldon Rothman, I never said that I considered all partial observance to be hypocritical. I have respect, for example, for the Jew who, living ten miles from the nearest synagogue, regularly drives to it on the Sabbath in violation of Jewish law out of a need to pray with other Jews, because I can appreciate both that need and the difficulty of walking so far. But—to take the behavior recommended by the *Etz Hayim* Bible—the Jew who thinks he has become more religiously observant by giving up pork while continuing to eat shrimp strikes me as a model of absurdity. What exactly is the hardship of not eating shrimp that would justify its continued consumption on the part of someone committed in principle to observing the dietary laws? This is a formula not for gradually greater standards of observance but for no real standards at all, and it is the formula that *Etz Hayim* adopts.

As for a historical Israelite sojourn in Egypt, since I feel quite comfortable believing in it myself, I do not know what makes Rabbi Chinitz conclude that I find Conservative belief in it "unacceptable." As I made clear in my article, Conservatism's fatal inconsistency, in my opinion, lies in its understanding of the revelation at Sinai rather than in its general affirmation of the historicity of the Bible.

I thank Jerome A. Chanes for his correction and Rabbi Milton H. Polin for his comments.

Die-Hard

TO THE EDITOR:

Richard Pipes's discussion of Eric Hobsbawm and his Stalinist record could be extended in one regard [Books in Review, April]. That Hobsbawm still believes he was right in his devotion to Communism may be seen in an interview (reported in the *Times Literary Supplement*, October 28, 1994) with Michael Ignatieff, who asked Hobsbawm how he justified his long-time membership in the Communist party.

Hobsbawm: "You didn't have the option. You see, either there was going to be a future or there wasn't going to be a future and this [the Communist party] was the only thing that offered an acceptable future."

Ignatieff: "In 1934, millions of people are dying in the Soviet experiment. If you had known that, would it have made a difference to you at that time? To your commitment? To being a Communist?"

Hobsbawm: "This is the sort of academic question to which an answer is simply not possible. . . . If I were to give you a retrospective answer which is not the answer of a historian, I would have said, 'probably not.'"

Ignatieff: "Why?"

Hobsbawm: "Because in a period in which, as you might imagine, mass murder and mass suffering are absolutely universal, the chance of a new world being born in great suffering would still have been worth backing. Now the point is, looking back as an historian, I would say that the sacrifices made by the Russian people were probably only marginally worthwhile. The sacrifices were enormous; they were excessive by almost any standard and excessively great. But I'm looking back at it now, and I'm saying that because it turns out that the Soviet Union was not the beginning of the world revolution. Had it been, I'm not sure."

Ignatieff: "What that comes down to is saying that had the radiant tomorrow actually been created, the loss of fifteen, twenty million people might have been justified?"

Hobsbawm: "Yes."

The topper is that Prime Minister Tony Blair authorized Queen Elizabeth to name Hobsbawm a Companion of Honor, one of the highest awards in the realm, given for "services of special importance to the nation."

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

Correction

In "The New Gloomsayers" by Joshua Muravchik (June), the first name of the historian Charles Beard was wrongly given as James (page 25). We regret the error—ED.

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CONTROVERSY

A Scientific Scandal?

David Berlinski & Critics

DAN-E. NILSSON:

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to David Berlinski's essay on the 1994 paper I authored with Susanne Pelger called "A Pessimistic Estimate of the Time Required for an Eye to Evolve" ["A Scientific Scandal," April]. Because it gives them credibility, I generally do not debate pseudo-scientists, but I have decided to make an exception here.

Apart from a mix-up in chronology and some other minor peculiarities, the only major flaw in Mr. Berlinski's description of our paper is his misunderstanding of the response variable R, which he calls a measure of "visual acuity." It is not, and the original paper does not say so. This is his first serious mistake—and it gets worse.

Mr. Berlinski's next move is to list the important information he claims is missing in our paper. (At regular intervals he repeats the phrase: "they do not say.") But all the necessary information is there. I cannot reply individually to every point here, but two examples will do. Mr. Berlinski claims that there is no unit for morphological change and that we do not explain how we arrive at a sum of 1,829 steps of 1 percent, but explanations for both are given on page 56 of our paper. He further claims that we fail to explain how morphological change relates to improvements in visual acuity, though pages 54 through 56 (together with the graphs and legends in figures 1 and 3) deal with exactly that, and in great detail.

For the rest of his essay Mr. Berlinski focuses on issues where he believes he has detected logical flaws. He is not right in a single case, and instead reveals an insufficient background in visual optics, sampling theory, basic evolutionary theory, and more. Nor does he seem to have read key references such as Warrant & McIntyre (1993), Falconer (1989), or Futuyma (1986). Without such knowledge it would be hard to grasp the details of our paper, but it is standard scientific practice not to repeat lengthy reasoning when a short reference can be given.

But there is more. Mr. Berlinski has a problem with definitions. "Morphological change" becomes "biological change." "Spatial resolution" (visual acuity) becomes "sensitivity of vision." He does not distinguish between selection and intensity of selection. He is obviously confused by the difference between the 1-percent steps that we use as a unit of measure for morphological change and the 0.005-percent change per generation that is our conservative estimate of evolutionary rate.

Mr. Berlinski attempts a peculiar probability argument involving the random substitution into the word "at" of letters "fished from an urn," but he does not realize that his example implies a single individual in the population, in which case there can of course be no selection at all. Again, he badly needs to read Falconer's standard work.

Contrary to Mr. Berlinski's claim, we calculate the spatial resolution (visual acuity) for all parts of our eye-evolution sequence, and the results are displayed in figure 1 of our paper. The underlying theory is explained in the main text, including the important equation 1 and a reference to Warrant & McIntyre (1993), where this theory is derived. Yet Mr. Berlinski insists that "Nils-

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son and Pelger do *not* calculate the visual acuity of any structure." It would be much simpler for Mr. Berlinski if he went just a tiny step farther and denied the existence of our paper altogether.

Had these and other points been unfortunate misunderstandings, I would have been only too happy to help, but I have the distinct impression that they are deliberate attempts to eliminate uncomfortable scientific results. Why does Mr. Berlinski not read up on the necessary scientific background? Why does he so blatantly misquote our paper? Why has he never asked me for the details of the calculation he claims to want so badly? It is simply impossible to take Mr. Berlinski seriously.

Mr. Berlinski is right on one point only: the paper I wrote with Pelger has been incorrectly cited as containing a computer simulation of eye evolution. I have not considered this to be a very serious problem, because a simulation would be a mere automation of the logic in our paper. A complete simulation is thus of moderate scientific interest, although it would be useful from an educational point of view.

Our paper remains scientifically sound, and has not been challenged in any peer-reviewed scientific journal. I do not intend to take any further part in a meaningless debate with David Berlinski.

Lund University
Lund, Sweden

PAUL R. GROSS:

"A Scientific Scandal" is itself a scientific scandal: the continued publication, in a political-cultural opinion journal, of David Berlinski's uninformed bellyaching about evolutionary biology. COMMENTARY is not the place for quasi-technical arguments against Darwinism, or for reprinting the scientific papers or textbook chapters that disprove them.

Mr. Berlinski has several times found fault with me. The method is characteristic, and it is salient in this latest article. I had written earlier that his disparagements of Darwinism are old and naive, refuted in the literature. Responding in the March issue ("Darwinism versus Intelligent Design"), he dismissed this airily as an unanswerable gripe. But it is not a gripe. Nor was it meant to be answered in COMMENTARY. It is just a fact about the scientific literature. Any reader can check for himself. Examples include: Mark Ridley, *Evolution*, 2nd Edition (1996); John Gerhart and Marc Kirschner, *Cells, Embryos, and Evolution* (1997); Rudolf A. Raff, *The Shape of Life* (1996).

Only once, in the eleven years since the start of their anti-evolution PR-blitz, have any arguments of Mr. Berlinski's colleagues at the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture appeared in the primary literature. That was an early philosophical monograph by the Christian apologist William Dembski. Mr. Berlinski (in "Has Darwin Met His Match?," December 2002) now rejects that argument as applied to biology, although he gave Dembski's book a glowing blurb. The rest of their anti-evolution kvetching has been in trade books mainly from religious publishers, in nonscientific journals, testimony to legislators, interviews, speeches, and rallies for the faithful. For this, Mr. Berlinski offered the crank excuse: scientific prejudice. And as *coup de main*, he quoted lines from a 1986 essay of mine. But the burden of that essay is precisely the opposite of Mr. Berlinski's reason for quoting it. It was about a distinguished regular contributor *to the scientific literature*.

The obvious purpose of "A Scientific Scandal," like Mr. Berlinski's other adventures in evolutionary thought, is to belittle Darwinism. He cites Darwin himself, who worried a little that his theory might not be able to account for the eye. Mr. Berlinski's real case is that Darwin's fears were justified: evolutionary theory cannot explain the eye, and there has been a cover-up. But Darwin's fears are ancient history: Darwin was still haunted by Paley's 1802 version of the argument from design. A century and a half have passed.

In the 21st century there is no question that eyes, endlessly varied in structure and quality, have evolved. Most of the intermediates between a primitive patch of photosensitive cells and the camera eye of a fish or a mammal exist. Many more have existed in the past, during the 540 million years since there have been eyes.

So what is the fuss about? In their 1994 theoretical paper, Nilsson and Pelger *modeled* one possible evolutionary pathway to the geometry of a fish-like eye from a patch of photoresponsive cells. There were already such cells on Earth a billion years before there were eyes. Nilsson and Pelger used pessimistic estimates of such relevant parameters as the intensity of selection for their number-crunching. The point was to determine how many plausible, populational micro-steps of variation would be needed for very weak selection to yield a fish-like eye—and then under reasonable assumptions to convert micro-steps into generations and years. The answer was about 350,000—a geological blink of the eye. This answer is just one of many to the failed 19th-century complaint of insufficient time for evolution to have taken place.

Mr. Berlinski misunderstands or misinterprets critical elements of the paper. Then he quibbles ponderously about terms and assumptions—and about a popular gloss of the paper by Richard Dawkins. He accuses some of his critics of fraud for having failed to denounce Dawkins's use in a trade book of certain of those terms. Mr. Berlinski's arguments *are* quibbles.

But these quibbles are beside the real point, which is that we lack grounds for believing that eyes evolved. That is false. Eyes, like anything else, could have been invented at a stroke by a supernatural

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In 1989, an editorial in the respected British publication, the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* stated:

> The therapeutic potential of uncontaminated, pure honey is grossly underutilized. It is widely available in most communities and although the mechanism of action of its properties remains obscure and needs further investigation, the time has come for conventional medicine to lift the blinds off this traditional remedy and give it its due recognition. (Vol. 82, pp.384-385).

In the 14 years since this editorial appeared, there has been an outpouring of work on honey—not anecdotes, but solid scientific studies—that document the medicinal value of honey.

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A number of different types of wounds have been successfully treated with Honey, including:

abrasions, amputations, abscesses, bed sores, burns, burst abdominal wounds following cesarean delivery, cancrum, cervical ulcers, chilblains, cracked nipples, cuts, diabetic foot ulcers and other diabetic ulcers, a fistula, foot ulcers in lepers, infected wounds arising from trauma, large septic wounds, leg ulcers, malignant ulcers, sickle cell ulcers, skin ulcers, surgical wounds, wounds to the abdominal wall and perineum, varicose ulcers.

The drug industry spends billions on advertising and promotion—$7 billion on sales representatives alone (*The New Republic*, December 16, 2002), billions more on print and TV ads. In contrast, the total sales of honey in the U.S. are miniscule—well under a billion dollars. The drug industry has a powerful lobby in Washington D.C., the honey industry has none. The "side effects" portion of drug information often runs into thousands of words; there are no side effects for honey. The advertising budget for honey is next to nothing. The positive results of clinical studies on honey are truly amazing—if drug companies had results like this you'd be bombarded with the data. Now, a new book details the amazing, proven benefits of honey.

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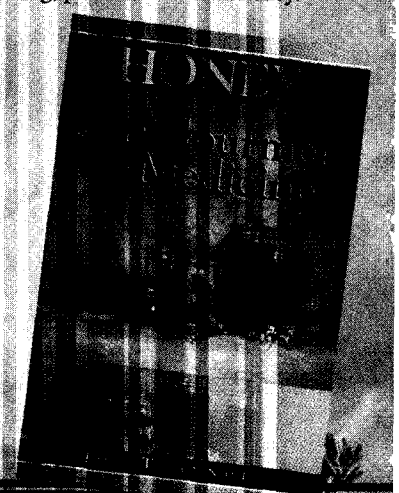

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designer. But there is no evidence of it. Neither can it ever be disproved. The only *explanation*, however, that we have for the structure of eyes—as solid as any explanation in science—is Darwinian evolution.

Like the intelligent-design group as a whole, Mr. Berlinski seems unable or unwilling to understand the newest branch of biology: evolutionary *developmental* biology. There, with the discovery of the developmental regulatory genes, we have learned how subtle, how versatile, and yet how simple the mechanisms can be for transforming one biological structure to another. (A professional but accessible account can be found in *From DNA to Diversity: Molecular Genetics and the Evolution of Animal Design* [2001] by Sean B. Carroll, Jennifer K. Grenier, and Scott D. Weatherbee. A popular but sound insight is available in: "Which Came First, the Feather or the Bird?" by Richard O. Prum and Alan H. Brush, *Scientific American*, March 2003.) A reader whose view of science comes only from Mr. Berlinski will never know of such things.

Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

MATT YOUNG:

Creationists often claim, without presenting evidence, that there has not been enough time for a complex organ such as the eye to have evolved. To examine that claim empirically, Nilsson and Pelger devised a scenario in which an eye could have evolved through stages that are known to exist in the animal kingdom. I described their scenario in my last letter to COMMENTARY (March), and David Berlinski has it almost right in "A Scientific Scandal."

Briefly, Nilsson and Pelger formed an eye by changing various parameters, such as aperture diameter, in 1-percent increments, until no improvement could be made. One percent is an arbitrary number (any small increment will suffice) and does not represent the change in a single generation. Using what they and Richard Dawkins describe as conservative numbers, Nilsson and Pelger calculated an average change of 0.005 percent per generation. The relative change in n generations is therefore $(1.00005)^n$, which they set equal to the overall change of morphology in their simulation ($1.01^{1,829}$, where 1,829 is the number of 1-percent steps required to form an eye). The number 1.00005 is not, contrary to Mr. Berlinski, a percentage; it is the relative change of a given parameter in a single generation. Nilsson and Pelger concluded that an eye could have evolved in approximately 350,000 years.

Does anyone claim that an eye evolved precisely as Nilsson and Pelger's simulation suggests? No. But I stand by my statement that they have given the lie to the creationists' claim and firmly made the case that an eye could have evolved within a geologically short time.

Mr. Berlinski argues, for example, that morphological changes of the skull might slow the process. Never mind that only vertebrates have skulls, and Nilsson and Pelger's eye is, again contrary to Mr. Berlinski, an invertebrate eye. The development of an eye will require not only morphological changes but also advancements to the nervous system and the brain. Will these requirements bring evolution to a halt? Georges Cuvier asked the same question in 1812, and the answer is, "no." We now know that evolution progresses in a modular way, with different systems evolving in parallel and nearly independently. If Mr. Berlinski thinks that various modules could not have coevolved, he needs to support his argument quantitatively, not just proclaim it. Nilsson and Pelger have shown precisely what they set out to show: that an eye could have evolved in a geologically short time and that the eye itself is not a limiting factor. Mr. Berlinski holds against them that they did not perform the full-fledged simulation he wants them to have done and seems to think that their calculation is therefore somehow faulty.

I will not respond to Mr. Berlinski's disdainful tone, nor to the cheap shots directed at me personally. Nor will I continue the pointless distraction of whether Nilsson and Pelger performed a simulation or a calculation. I am, however, concerned with Mr. Berlinski's contention that reputable scientists have conspired to support a technical paper that he finds "unfounded"; charging specific individuals with "fraud" is not to be taken lightly. The paper has survived peer review, and has not been shown to be unfounded in any peer-reviewed journal. If Mr. Berlinski thinks the paper is unfounded, let him submit a paper of his own to a peer-reviewed journal and find out what the scientific community thinks of his ideas. It is unlikely that scientific journals, which have occasionally published papers on homeopathic medicine and the Bible codes, would reject Mr. Berlinski's paper out of sheer prejudice.

Colorado School of Mines
Golden, Colorado

MARK PERAKH:

It is funny that COMMENTARY—by no measure a scientific publication—has allocated so much space to recent articles by David Berlinski. With no record of scientific research, either in biology or in computer science, he sets out to pronounce judgment on topics within these two fields.

But contrary to Mr. Berlinski's rhetoric, any scandal related to Nilsson and Pelger's paper occurred only in Mr. Berlinski's imagination. Nilsson and Pelger estimate the time necessary for the development of an eye, a calculation that entails certain assumptions but which is viewed by many scientists as sufficiently sound. (According to the *Science Citation Index*, Nilsson and Pelger's article has been positively referenced in at least 25 peer-reviewed scientific publications.)

But Mr. Berlinski, unlike all these scientists, does not like Nilsson and

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David B. Ruderman is Joseph Meyerhoff Professor of Modern Jewish History and Director of the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, he taught at Yale University and the University of Maryland, where he was instrumental in establishing both institutions' Judaic Studies programs. Professor Ruderman is president of the American Academy for Jewish Research, and has a lifetime achievement award from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

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Pelger's conclusion, and obfuscates the issue by discussing the distinctions among computer simulations, models, and calculations. These semantic exercises are inconsequential to the real question: whether an eye could have developed in a geologically short time via a Darwinian mechanism, as Nilsson and Pelger and scores of biologists familiar with their work think.

A reader cannot fail to notice an especially appalling feature of Mr. Berlinski's escapade: he accuses ten respected scientists of "scientific fraud." The reason for that preposterous accusation is that they did not repudiate Nilsson and Pelger's work. Mr. Berlinski apparently cannot imagine that these scientists, among them professional biologists and physicists with records of substantial achievement, can have an opinion of Nilsson and Pelger's work different from his own. His accusation sounds even odder coming from a man who provided rave blurbs for books by William Dembski and Michael Behe even though, as is clear from his article in the December 2002 COMMENTARY, he is actually in disagreement with them regarding essential parts of their assertions. Maybe by his standards this is a manifestation of integrity, but to me it looks more like an expediency whose roots are not exactly in the search for scientific truth.

Bonsall, California

JASON ROSENHOUSE:

Connoisseurs of pseudoscience will recognize in David Berlinski's latest essay the standard tropes of the crank's playbook: the smug sarcastic tone, the barrage of bullet-point criticisms to create the illusion that something truly rotten is being exposed (criticisms he knows will be answered by nothing more formidable than a few indignant letters), the crude baiting of scholars of vastly greater accomplishment than he, and the presentation of minor errors as tantamount to fraud.

Mr. Berlinski has no interest in bringing clarity to difficult scientific issues. If he did, he would not have made so many misrepresentations in describing Nilsson and Pelger's work. Two examples: Mr. Berlinski's claim that their model eyes were simply "flogged up an adaptive peak" ignores the fact that establishing the existence of such a peak was one of the primary accomplishments of the paper. That there is a smooth gradient of increasing visual acuity linking a light-sensitive spot to a lens-bearing eye is a discovery that they made, not a foregone conclusion. And his claim that "in their paper there is no mention whatsoever of randomly occurring changes" falls flat, since the need for such changes is explicitly mentioned in the discussion section of the paper, and is plainly implied throughout.

In addition, Mr. Berlinski would not have unloaded so many spurious criticisms. For example, his query—"why is selection pressure held constant over the course of 300,000 years"—is easily answered by noting that it was held constant at a value that was ludicrously low for almost any environment.

Once we have swept the field of Mr. Berlinski's distortions we are left with a few simple facts. (1) Several decades of research on the evolution of eyes has not only made it plain that eyes have evolved, but has also revealed the major steps through which they did so. (2) Nilsson and Pelger's paper provides an elegant capstone for this research, by providing a convincing calculation for an upper limit on the time required for an eye to evolve. (3) Minor errors in popular treatments of Nilsson and Pelger's paper do nothing to change facts (1) and (2). (4) Finally, David Berlinski is not a reliable source for scientific information.

Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas

NICK MATZKE:

David Berlinski should be congratulated for pointing out Richard Dawkins's inaccurate description of Nilsson and Pelger's paper as a stochastic computer simulation of the evolution of the eye (it was actually a mathematical model). But Mr. Berlinski should remove the plank from his own (discussion of the) eye. He asserts that one of the problems that Nilsson and Pelger did not consider was how the skull would be "reconstructed" to include eye sockets. But as any decent student of even high-school biology would know, eyes evolved before bones. Cephalochordates, the closest invertebrate relatives of vertebrates, have primitive eyes but no bones. In fact, based on genetic evidence, many biologists now think that vertebrate eyes share a common ancestral eyespot with insect eyes.

To envision the evolution of the eye as occurring on some kind of mythical eyeless fish with a fully formed skull and brain is a typical creationist straw man. Biologists know that all manner of gradations of eye complexity exist in extant organisms, from creatures with a single photoreceptor cell, through the various stages that Nilsson and Pelger depict, to the advanced camera-eyes of mammals and cephalopods. Sometimes the whole sequence from eyespot to advanced eye with lens can be seen in a single group (e.g., snails), yet another thing Mr. Berlinski would have known had he followed Nilsson and Pelger's reference to the classic work on eye evolution, a 56-page article by Salvini-Plawen and Mayr in *Evolutionary Biology* (vol. 10, 1977) called "On the Evolution of Photoreceptors and Eyes." That paper answers many of the questions that Mr. Berlinski asserts are unanswered or unanswerable.

If Mr. Berlinski is going to declare as bunk the central organizing theory of biology, he should take the matter up with biologists in the professional literature rather than in forums like COMMENTARY, wherein elementary questions like "which came first, skulls or eyes?" can be botched and yet still be published.

Goleta, California

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DAVID SAFIR:

Once again, David Berlinski has shown how a truly scientific inquiry can expose academic and intellectual fraud by evolutionists. As a physician, I have always been made uneasy by the assertions offered by proponents of evolution to explain complex biological life. Mr. Berlinski shows exactly how the process works: start with the belief that no other possible explanation for the diversity of life on earth could exist other than what we think we know about evolution; demonstrate utter contempt for other ideas (ad-hominem attacks are often employed here); then simply invent a pathway describing how it might have been possible to get from point A to point B—from a light-sensitive spot, say, to a complex eye. Where I come from this is called nonsense.

I would feel better about a theorist like Richard Dawkins if he did not pontificate about how gloriously perfect his explanations are. I cast my fate instead with scientists like Mr. Berlinski who keep an open mind. The jury is still out, after all, and will be for a very long time.

Los Gatos, California

NORMAN P. GENTIEU:

As a retired science writer, I appreciated David Berlinski's superb analysis refuting Nilsson and Pelger's simplistic scenario of the evolution of the mammalian eye. To account for the perfection of that incredibly complex organ by means of formulaic fumblings is nothing less than preposterous. I wonder if Nilsson and Pelger might some day use this iffy method to explain the development of stereoscopic color vision.

"A Scientific Scandal" is an apt name for the docile acceptance of a dubious theory. What has happened to vetting? Back in the 1950's, the science establishment did not hesitate to zap Immanuel Velikovsky and his *Worlds in Collision*.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

David Berlinski

In "A Scientific Scandal," I observed that Dan-E. Nilsson and Susanne Pelger's paper, "A Pessimistic Estimate of the Time Required for an Eye to Evolve," was a critic's smorgasbord. There are so many things wrong with it that even the finickiest of eaters could leave the table well-satisfied and ready for a round of Alka-Seltzer. But, in itself, there is nothing here that suggests a scandal. Dan-E. Nilsson is a distinguished scientist. Witness his discovery that the mysid shrimp, *Dioptromysis pauciponisa*, is an organism whose eyes are at once simple and compound (D. Nilsson, R.F. Modlin, "A Mysid Shrimp Carrying a Pair of Binoculars," *Journal of Experimental Biology*, Vol. 189, pp. 213-236, 1994), or his precise work on the optical system of the butterfly (D. Nilsson, M.F. Land, J. Howard, "Optics of the Butterfly Eye," *Journal of Comparative Physiology*, A 162, 341-366, 1988). Together with Susanne Pelger, he has simply written a silly paper. It happens. And in the literature of evolutionary biology, it happens very often.

No, the scientific scandal lies elsewhere. Nilsson and Pelger's paper has gained currency in both the popular and the scientific press because it has been misrepresented as a computer simulation, most notably by Richard Dawkins. Word spread from Dawkins's mouth to any number of eagerly cupped but woefully gullible ears. Subsequent references to Nilsson and Pelger's work have ignored what they actually wrote in favor of that missing computer simulation, in a nice example of a virtual form of virtual reality finally displacing the real thing altogether. This misrepresentation of scientific work is a species of fraud, no different in kind from plagiarism in journalism or the fabrication of data in experimental physics. It is the *indifference* to this fraud that I denounced as scandalous.

Recognizing so many fond familiar faces among my critics—Paul Gross, Jason Rosenhouse, Matt Young, and Mark Perakh have replied to previous essays of mine in COMMENTARY—I hoped that self-interest, if nothing else, might have prompted a moment of critical self-reflection. No very delicate moral sense is involved in determining that fraud is fraud. If Richard Dawkins is one of their own, all the more reason to apply to him the moral standards that Messrs. Gross, Rosenhouse, Young, and Perakh are accustomed to applying to their intellectual enemies.

Reading their letters, I realize that they had no intention of saying boo. What could I have been thinking?

DAN-E. NILSSON is persuaded that I wrote my essay because I am moved to reject "uncomfortable scientific results." He is mistaken. The length of time required to form an eye is a matter of perfect indifference to me; had he and Susanne Pelger been able to demonstrate that the eye was in fact formed over the course of a long weekend in the Hamptons, I would have warmly congratulated them. As I have many times remarked, I have no creationist agenda whatsoever and, beyond respecting the injunction to have a good time all the time, no religious principles, either. Evolution long, evolution short—it is all the same to me. I criticized their work not because its conclusions are unwelcome but because they are absurd.

The vertebrate eye, Nilsson and Pelger claim, emerged from a patch of light-sensitive cells. Climbing up evolution's greasy pole, or adaptive peak, those cells got to where they were going by invagination, aperture constriction, and lens formation. In explaining the evolution of the eye in terms of such global geometrical processes, Nilsson and Pelger rather resemble an art historian prepared to explain the emergence of the *Mona Lisa* in terms of preparing the wood, mixing the paint, and filling in the details. The

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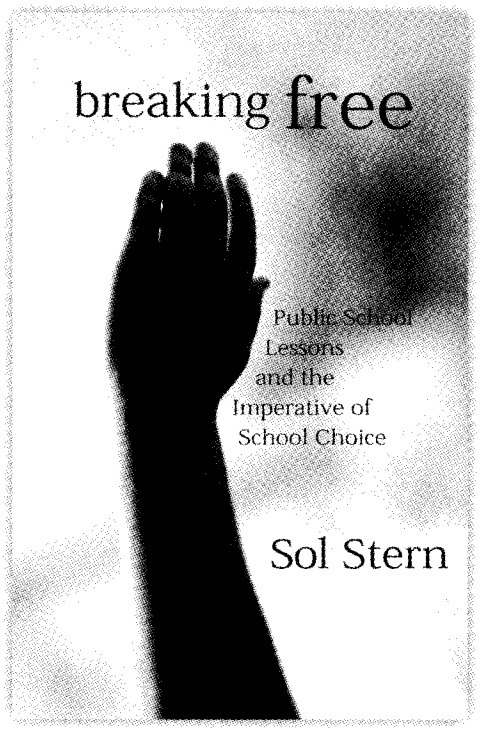
Sol Stern grew up in the South Bronx and attended New York City public schools in the 1940s and 1950s, receiving the best education that America's urban public schools had to offer at the time, strong on classroom fundamentals and affirming a clear vision of America's civic culture. In *Breaking Free*, he contrasts his experience with that of his two sons, both of whom recently attended some of New York's elite public schools. While spending time in these schools, he discovered things that should concern not only parents, but all Americans—instruction shaped by "progressive" fads and politically correct clichés; dictatorial unions that protect inept teachers; and a self protective bureaucracy that puts the interests of employees ahead of the needs of the students.

If these were the best public schools, Stern thought, the worst were unimaginable. He was right.

In his quest to understand what has gone wrong with American education, Stern also visited Catholic schools that were successfully educating minority and underprivileged children in New York. He vividly describes how these cash-starved schools are performing small miracles every day with children the public schools have betrayed or given up on. Moving on to Milwaukee and Cleveland, Stern found that voucher programs there have rescued large numbers of poor minority children from violent, chaotic and failing public schools and allowed them to attend parochial and private schools where high expectations often result in high achievement.



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conclusion—that Leonardo completed his masterpiece in more than a minute and less than a lifetime—while based squarely on the facts, seems rather less than a contribution to understanding.

It is hardly surprising, then, that while theoretical optics serves *qualitatively* to justify the overall connection Nilsson and Pelger draw between morphology and visual acuity, nothing in their paper and nothing in their references justifies the *quantitative* relationships they employ to reach their quantitative conclusion. To be sure, Mr. Nilsson denies that this is so. "Contrary to Mr. Berlinski's claim," he writes,

> we calculate the spatial resolution (visual acuity) for all parts of our eye-evolution sequence, and the results are displayed in figure 1 of our paper. The underlying theory is explained in the main text, including the important equation 1 and a reference to Warrant & McIntyre (1993), where this theory is derived.

In fact, no underlying theory whatsoever is explained in Nilsson and Pelger's main text, or in the legend to figure 1; and while they do assert that calculations were made, they do not say where they were made or how they were carried out. The burden of Mr. Nilsson's denials is conveyed entirely by equation 1 and by his references.

Let us start with equation 1, and with figure 1b that this equation is said to control. It is in figure 1b that aperture constriction takes over from invagination in getting an imaginary eye to see better. The graph juxtaposes aperture size against detectable spatial resolution. Having dimpled itself in figure 1a, Nilsson and Pelger's blob is now busy puckering its topmost surface to form a pinhole in figure 1b.* In a general way, the curve they present is unremarkable. No one doubts that spatial resolution is improved in an eye when its aperture is constricted. But why is it improved in just the way that Nilsson and Pelger's graph indicates?

Equation 1 is of scant help in this regard, despite Nilsson's insistence that it is important. Drawing a connection among visual acuity, focal length, light intensity, and noise, the equation specifies the local maximum of a curve, the place where it stops rising. In other words, it specifies a point; and it does nothing more. "We can now use this relationship," Nilsson and Pelger nevertheless declare, "to plot resolution against aperture diameter." They can do nothing of the sort, at least not in *my* calculus class. Knowing that a man has reached the summit of Mt. Everest, we still know nothing about the route he has taken to get there. What is needed if Nilsson and Pelger are to justify their graph is the equation from which equation 1 has been derived by differentiation. It is not there, just where I said it would not be.

Similarly with Nilsson and Pelger's references, which do nothing to support their argument. Quite the contrary. Three papers are at issue: (1) A.W. Snyder, S. Laughlin, and D. Stavenga, "Information Capacity of the Eyes" (*Vision Research*, vol. 17, 1163-1175, 1977); (2) A.W. Snyder, "Physics of Vision in Compound Eyes" (in *Vision in Invertebrates*, Handbook of Sensory Physiology, edited by H. Autrum, vol. VII/6A, pp. 225-313, 1979); and (3) E. J. Warrant & P.D. McIntyre, "Arthropod Eye Design and the Physical Limits to Spatial Resolving Power" (*Progress in Neurobiology*, vol. 40, pp. 413-461, 1993). Of these papers, the first is recapitulated (and corrected) in the second, and the second is summarized in the third. In what follows, references to Snyder are always to the Snyder of his second paper.

As their titles might suggest, both "Physics of Vision in Compound Eyes" and "Arthropod Eye Design and the Physical Limits to Spatial Resolving Power" deal with *compound invertebrate* eyes. Nilsson and Pelger's work is devoted to the evolution of the *camera* eye characteristic of fish and cephalopods. Theoretical considerations that apply to bugs do not necessarily apply to fish or octopuses, the more so since their eyes are structurally different, as are their evolutionary histories. Writing about the compound eye, Nilsson himself has remarked that "it is only a small exaggeration to say that evolution seems to be fighting a desperate battle to improve a basically disastrous design" (Dan-E. Nilsson, "Optics and Evolution of the Compound Eye," in *Facets of Vision*, edited by D.G. Stavenga & R.C. Hardie, p. 3075, 1989). Whatever the desperate battle going on among the arthropods, there is no battle at all taking place among the vertebrates or the cephalopods. Nilsson and Pelger's eye moves from triumph to triumph with serene and remarkable celerity.

If the papers by Snyder and Warrant & McIntyre say nothing about fish or octopuses, neither do they say anything about evolution. No mention there of Darwin's theory, no discussion of morphology, not a word about invagination, aperture constriction, or lens formation, and *nothing* about the time required to form an eye, whether simple, compound, or camera-like.

The purpose of these three papers is otherwise. No less than any other system of communication, the eye represents a balance struck between signal and noise. There is the object out there in the real world—whether a point source like a star, or an extended source like a grating of light and dark lines—and there is its image trembling on the tips of the retina's budded nerve cells. Slippage arises between what the object is and how it is seen. Noise occurs in the visual system as the result of the random nature of photon emission, and it also occurs as the result of inherent imperfections in the eye's op-

* Three curves are given in figure 1b, representing three different levels of light intensity, but this plays no role in what follows.

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tical system. The theoretical optician abbreviates these limitations in one mathematical instrument.

Imagine one of Nilsson and Pelger's plucky light-sensitive cells, and then extend two flanking lines from the cell up past the constricted aperture and out into space, so that the cell and those two flanking lines form a cone with a flat top. In the center of the cone, where a cherry would sit atop the ice cream, there is a light source. The cherry moves to the sides of the cone in angular steps; the cell dutifully responds. The correlation between moving cherry and twitching cell constitutes the optician's "angular-sensitivity function."

Equation B15 (p. 238) in Snyder's "Physics of Vision in Compound Eyes" defines the signal-to-noise ratio of a hypothetical eye in terms of noise, modulation contrast (the difference in intensity between black and white stripes in a grating), and the modulation-transfer function, which is simply a mathematical transformation of the eye's angular-sensitivity function (its Fourier transform). Lumbering in Snyder's footsteps, Warrant & McIntyre split his equation into two of their own (equations 10 and 11 in Warrant & McIntyre, p. 430), the one describing the signal, the other the noise in a hypothetical visual system. They observe what is in any case obvious: whatever the parameters affecting visual acuity, signal and noise will always reach a point where the first is drowned out by the second and the system fails, a point evident enough to anyone trying to see in the dark.

These equations lead by primogeniture to Nilsson and Pelger's equation 1, which, as it happens, does not appear anywhere in their sources in the form in which they express it. But neither Snyder's original equation nor Warrant & McIntyre's bright bursting clones in any way suggest that the tipping point between signal and noise is unique. The ratio of signal to noise in an optical system depends on a host of factors, including head size and eye movement, most of which Nilsson and Pelger ignore. Nor, for that matter, do these equations taken in isolation justify any particular quantitative conclusions. Until the angular-sensitivity function is specified, whether theoretically or experimentally, its role is ceremonial.

Such specification is no easy business. Determining the shape of the angular-sensitivity function is a little like trying to guess an astronaut's weight in space. Scales are not likely to be of use. In an early paper dealing with this subject and devoted experimentally to flies, K.G. Götz noted that the angular-sensitivity function in *Drosophila* seemed to follow what is known mathematically as a Gaussian probability dis-

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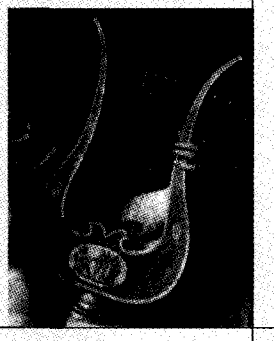

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tribution (K.G. Götz, "Die optischen Übertragungseigenschaften der Komplexaugen von *Drosophila*," *Kybernetik*, 2, pp. 215-221, 1965). It was an interesting idea, but one that led to very considerable computational difficulties.

Looking Götz-ward, and understandably recoiling, Snyder adopted a different strategy. In assessing the weight of an astronaut in space, it is simpler to count the calories he consumes and the exercise he undergoes than to try to measure his weight directly. His weight, although unmeasured, follows inferentially. In just the same way, Snyder thought to consider the angular-sensitivity function indirectly by considering the structures that determined its shape. These, he assumed, were the eye's retinal receptive field—the area of the retina responding to signals—and its optical "blur spot"—the smeared image represented on the retina corresponding to the sharp object being seen. Let them both, he declared, be identically Gaussian. Why not? Both parameters had simple mathematical natures. The retinal receptive field is given as the ratio of the rhabdom's diameter to its posterior nodal distance, the optical blur as the ratio of the wavelength of stimulating light to the eye's aperture. From this the shape of the angular-sensitivity function followed.

The result is known as the Snyder model. "*The great beauty of this model*," Warrant & McIntyre remark (in words that they have italicized), "*is that if one knows some very simple anatomical information about the eye*"—i.e., the nature of its optical blur spot and retinal receptive field—"*one has the ability to predict . . . the approximate shape of the angular-sensitivity function*" (p. 434). In referring to Warrant & McIntyre, Nilsson and Pelger are, in fact, appealing to Snyder, the *maître* behind their masters—for, like Snyder, they, too, assume that retinal receptive fields and optical blur spots are identically Gaussian (p. 54).

But theory is one thing, and living flesh another. Staking their all on Snyder's model, Nilsson and Pelger must live with its consequences. "Having considered the physical limitations to resolving power," Snyder wrote, "in addition to the absolute sensitivity of eyes, we now apply our concepts to real compound eyes." This is something that Nilsson and Pelger never do. And no wonder. For Snyder then added the rather important caveat that bringing theory to bear on life "requires *precise* knowledge [of various optical parameters] in the various regions of the eye" (Snyder, p. 276, emphasis in the original).

If precise knowledge is needed in applying Snyder's model, precise detail is what is lacking in Nilsson and Pelger's paper. Precise detail? *Any* detail whatsoever.

And for obvious reasons. When tested, Snyder's model turns out to be *false* across a wide range of arthropods. As Warrant & McIntyre note glumly, "The model, on the whole, works best for those eyes for which it was originally formulated—apposition compound eyes functioning according to geometrical optics—but recent careful and sensitive measurements of angular sensitivity reveal that even in these types of eye, the model often performs poorly." Readers may consult figure 34 (p. 441) of Warrant & McIntyre's paper to see how poorly the Snyder model does. In studies of the locust *Locustia*, real and predicted angular-sensitivity functions do not even share the same qualitative shape.

Responding to my observation that no quantitative argument supports their quantitative conclusions—no argument at all, in fact—Mr. Nilsson has thus (1) offered a mathematically incoherent appeal to his only equation; (2) cited references that make no mention of any morphological or evolutionary process; (3) defended a theory intended to describe the evolution of vertebrate camera eyes by referring to a theory describing the theoretical optics of compound invertebrate eyes; (4) failed to explain why his own work has neglected to specify any relevant biological parameter precisely; and (5) championed his results by means of assumptions that his own sources indicate are false across a wide range of organisms.

In acknowledgments to their paper, Nilsson & Pelger thank E. J. Warrant for help with their computations; in the acknowledgments to *their* paper, Warrant & McIntyre thank Mr. Nilsson for critically reading what they have written.

Schnapps all around, I am sure.

I TURN next to the morphological units that are missing from Nilsson and Pelger's paper. It makes no sense to say of a ruler that it is one long. One what? When the "what" has been specified, a physical unit has been indicated: one inch, say, in the case of length, one pound in the case of weight. If one inch and one pound are units, length and weight are their dimensions. Only an origin in zero remains to be specified to complete the picture.

In my essay, I observed that Nilsson and Pelger had not specified their unit of morphological change. Nilsson now asks me to consider again their remarks on p. 56 of their paper. There, he is certain, I will find the missing unit carefully explained. Here is what they write, and it is *all* that they write: "Our principles have been to use whole-length measurements of straight structures, arc lengths of curved structures, and height and width of voluminous structures."

Very well. These are the fundamental units. They are none too clearly explained—try estimating the volume of a donut by looking at its height and width—but I know roughly what Nilsson and Pelger are getting at. What they do not say is *how* these three separate fundamental units are combined in a single overall derived unit of change.

A homely example may make this

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more vivid. Except for the fact that it cannot see, a Swedish meatball is rather like an eye. And plainly it makes no sense to ask of two Swedish meatballs, one of them twice as greasy but half as wide as the other, which of them is bigger—at least not until units of grease and length have been *combined*. But this is, in general, no easy task, not even when shape alone is under consideration. "It is important to keep in mind," C.P. Klingenberg and L. J. Leamy write ("Quantitative Genetics of Geometric Shape in the Mouse Mandible," *Evolution*, 55(11), pp. 2342-2352, 2001), "that shape is a multivariate feature and cannot be easily divided into scalar traits without imposing arbitrary constraints on the results of the analysis." To see how difficult a conceptual problem Nilsson and Pelger have set themselves, readers may follow the trail of Klingenberg & Leamy's references to the badlands of current work on geometric morphometrics.

Operating perhaps on the principle that a difficulty disclosed is a difficulty denied, Nilsson and Pelger do mention this very point, citing an example of their own on p. 56 to show just how arbitrary can be the business of calculating combined or derived units. In then justifying their own procedure, which is never explained, they remark: "As we are going to relate our measure of morphological change only to general estimates of phenotypic variation" in visual acuity, "we will be safe as long we avoid unorthodox and strange ways of comparing origin and product."

Origin and product? I am sure they meant origin and unit. No matter. The remark speaks for itself.

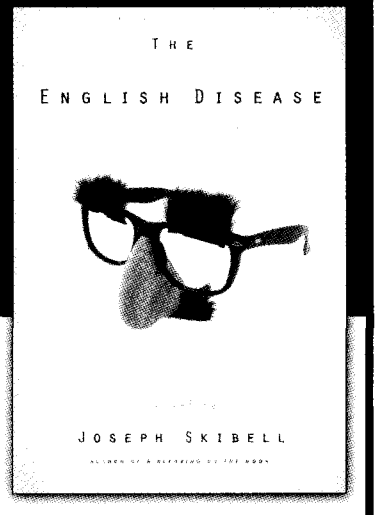
THERE IS next the matter of random variation: the heart of the matter so far as I am concerned. Nilsson and Pelger's paper is not an exercise in theoretical optics. It is intended to serve polemical purposes. Thus, they write: "In this context it is obvious that the eye was never a real threat to Darwin's theory of evolution" (p. 58). By "this context," they mean one in which only "eye geometry" and "optical structures" are up for grabs. But whether in this context or any other, it is as a defense of Darwin's theory that Nilsson and Pelger's theory fails most obviously.

Let me review the chief steps in their argument. There is morphological change on the one hand, visual acuity on the other. As their population of light-sensitive cells alters its geometry—by means never specified—visual acuity perks up. In all, they assert, 1,829 steps are involved in tracing a path from their first patch to their final "product."

Just how do Nilsson and Pelger's light-sensitive cells move from one step on that path to the next? I am not asking for the details, but for the odds. There are two possibilities. Having reached the first step on the path, the probability that they will reach the second (and so on to the last) is either one or less than one. If one, their theory cannot be Darwinian—there are no random changes. If less than one, it cannot be right—there is no way to cover 1,829 steps in roughly 300,000 generations if each step must be discounted by the probability of its occurrence.

Demonstrating the existence of a path between two points in the history of life is in general not hard. What is hard is determining how the path was *discovered*. (This was the point of the linguistic example I offered in my essay.) If one assumes, as Nilsson and Pelger do, that probabilities need not be taken into account because all transitions occur with a probability of one, there is no problem to be discussed—but nothing of any conceivable interest, either. In responding to this obvious point by generously suggesting that I need to spend more time by the lamp with D.S. Falconer's *Principles of Quantitative Genetics*, Mr. Nilsson has covered an embarrassment by addressing an irrelevance. Neither

In the great tradition of literary neurotics, Charles Belski picks up where Portnoy left off.



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population size nor natural selection is at issue.

A few minor matters. Falconer's response variable R is a measure, all right: a measure of the extent to which the mean of some quantitative phenotypic character—snout length, crop yield, scab color, or scrotum size (examples from the literature, I am afraid)—rises or falls as the result of natural selection. Just what I said, just as I explained. Although I offered no definitions in my essay, the paraphrases I employed were harmless. Why not say "sensitivity to vision" instead of "visual acuity," just to vary pace and prose? But in one respect, Mr. Nilsson is right: I did not distinguish between selection and intensity of selection. Neither does he. Neither does Falconer's response statistic, which contains only one selectional parameter, and that one measuring the intensity of selection. Neither does anyone else in this context.

His paper with Susanne Pelger, Mr. Nilsson writes, has never been criticized in the peer-reviewed literature. I am certain that this is so.

PAUL R. GROSS takes the occasion of his current letter to assure readers that what he meant in his last letter he did not say and what he said he did not mean. Like golf, Mr. Gross suggested in the 1986 essay from which I uncharitably quoted in the March COMMENTARY, science is rather a clubby affair, and just as a great many men prefer to cover the links sedately in the company of men like themselves—tassels on their shoes, alligators on their polo shirts—so scientists prefer to keep company with their own, men and women who share their tastes, point of view, outlook on life.

These are sentiments so candid that I was surprised to find Mr. Gross expressing them. But he is now prepared to disown what he said. The club is just fine, and just look at those splendid greens! The admissions board is to be faulted only when, by accident or inadvertence, it excludes one of its own, a scientist who like L.V. Heilbrunn has *published in the literature*. Such men are entitled to wear the gold cufflinks with the crossed golf clubs; keeping *them* out would be irresponsible. But keeping out the others is not only good science but good sense. *Ipse dixit*.

A few other points deserve comment. In offering Nilsson and Pelger the oil of his approval, Mr. Gross affirms that I have misunderstood or misinterpreted critical elements of their paper. In keeping with his longstanding policy of never documenting his discontent, he does not say which elements. As I keep reminding him, this is not sporting. Still, it is inconceivably droll to see Mr. Gross excusing Richard Dawkins's misrepresentation of Nilsson and Pelger's work by appealing to the fact that Dawkins expressed his views in a *trade* book. Mr. Gross apparently believes that outside the country club, a man can say anything he wants, a policy that he would not dream of applying to critics of Darwin's theory.

A few of Mr. Gross's remarks suggest a need for remedial reading. I have never argued that "evolutionary theory cannot explain the eye." How on earth would I know *that*? And explain what in particular? Its emergence, its structure, its physiology, its biochemistry? What I contended specifically is that Nilsson and Pelger's paper is just nuts. Conspiracies and cover-ups are, in any case, not in my line, and I never suggested or supposed that evolutionary biologists who failed to criticize Richard Dawkins for misrepresenting Nilsson and Pelger did so as part of a conspiracy. Like *droshky* horses, they were only doing what comes naturally: turning a blind eye.

If the burden of Nilsson and Pelger's paper was to demonstrate the existence of "one possible evolutionary pathway to the geometry of a fish-like eye from a patch of photoresponsive cells," as Mr. Gross writes, they have surely wasted their time. The existence of such a path is hardly in doubt. Every normal human being creates an eye from a patch of photoresponsive cells in nine months.

I certainly agree that the "only explanation we have for the structure of the eye . . . is Darwinian evolution." But neither an orchestra nor an explanation becomes good by being the only game in town.

On the other hand, I disagree that Darwin's theory is as "solid as any explanation in science." Disagree? I regard the claim as preposterous. Quantum electrodynamics is accurate to thirteen or so decimal places; so, too, general relativity. A leaf trembling in the wrong way would suffice to shatter either theory. What can Darwinian theory offer in comparison?

Finally, I would hardly dispute Mr. Gross's claim that "with the discovery of the developmental regulatory genes, we have learned how subtle, how versatile, and yet how simple the mechanism can be for transforming one biological structure to another." If he were to re-read the correspondence (COMMENTARY, September 1996) following the publication of my "The Deniable Darwin" (June 1996), he could not fail to be struck by my reply to his own letter, in which I specifically called attention to work on regulatory genes and eye formation—the very work that he now suggests I am keeping from my readers. Subtle and versatile, those genes? Yes, indeed. Absolutely astonishing? That, too. But hardly a triumph of Darwin's theory. For one thing, no Darwinian theorist had predicted the existence of these genes; for another, no Darwinian theorist has explained their emergence. The facts are simply far more fascinating than anything that poor drab Darwin, endlessly sifting time and chance, could possibly have imagined.

CITING THOSE ever useful but eternally anonymous "creationists,"

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Matt Young argues yet again, as he did in our earlier exchange, that Nilsson and Pelger have given the lie to creationist claims. If it was their computer simulation that originally lent ardor to his asseverations, now it is their paper itself. Mr. Young is a man plainly prepared to rely on an endless series of fallback positions. In the end, he may have to argue that his refutation is its own best friend, and that Nilsson and Pelger's paper is itself superfluous.

No one doubts that the eye has evolved. Not me, in any event. Fish have eyes; rocks do not. Those eyes came from somewhere—right?—and if coming from somewhere counts as evolution, count me among its champions. No one doubts, furthermore, that the "eye could have evolved in 350,000 generations." As I remarked earlier, the eye could have evolved in a weekend. The issue is whether it could have evolved in 350,000 generations *given the constraints of random variation and natural selection*.

I have absolutely no idea. Neither do Nilsson and Pelger. And neither does Matt Young.

Arguing now from the last trench before the bunker, Mr. Young writes that Nilsson and Pelger's paper deals with the development of *invertebrate* eyes, and triumphantly chides me for overlooking this point. On p. 56 of their paper, Nilsson and Pelger write: "After constriction of the aperture and the gradual formation of a lens, the final product becomes a focused camera-type eye with the geometry typical for aquatic animals (e.g. fish and cephalopods)." Fish are, of course, vertebrates, as anyone who has picked the flesh from a flounder knows. Perhaps I will be forgiven if I refer to this exchange as shooting fish in a barrel.

Making the point that the emergence of even the most modest eye will require simultaneous and parallel evolutionary development, Mr. Young asks that I defend my claim that this process could not have taken place by quantitative steps. In the first place, I made no such claim, if only because its truth struck me as obvious. But were I to make such a claim I would observe, as Richard Dawkins does, that to the extent that simultaneous and parallel changes are required to form a complex organ, to that extent does the hypothesis of random variation and natural selection become implausible. It is one thing to find a single needle in a haystack, quite another to find a dozen needles in a dozen haystacks at precisely the same time. Surely the burden of proof in such matters is not mine. I am not obliged to defend such mathematical trivialities as the proposition that as independent events are multiplied in number, their joint probability of occurrence plummets.

I have no idea what Mr. Young means when he writes that the number 1.00005 is not a percentage. Every number can be expressed as a percent, and every percent is a pure number. But he gets half credit for spotting a slip: the figure of 1.00005 between parentheses on p. 33 in my text should have been .005. Mr. Nilsson, who also spotted the slip, gets the other half. Me? I blame my editors.

Finally, I did not fault the scientific community for failing to criticize Nilsson and Pelger's work. I did the job of criticism myself. I faulted the Darwinian community—Mr. Young included—for failing to denounce scientific fraud, specifically the misrepresentation of Nilsson and Pelger's work by Richard Dawkins. Now I see that Mr. Young feels I have manhandled him in these exchanges. Too bad. COMMENTARY is not some academic mouse hole.

MARK PERAKH, a *sensei* of the "noted scientists say" school of self-defense, is right in one respect: the computer simulation missing from Nilsson and Pelger's paper has no bearing on what they actually said and claimed. And right in a second respect: "The real question [is] whether an eye could have developed in a geologically short time *via a Darwinian mechanism*" (emphasis added). But then, although quite confident that I am wrong in my criticisms, he offers nothing by way of rebuttal. Like so many of these martial-arts types, he is too busy preparing himself to run from the field with honor to bother doing battle.

Contrary to what Mr. Perakh asserts, not only can I imagine, I do not doubt, that "distinguished scientists," many with a record of "substantial achievement," can have an opinion different from my own. It happens all the time. I would not dream of accusing ten respected scientists of fraud simply because they passed on the opportunity to have a go at Nilsson and Pilger. The men and women I criticized earned my contempt the hard and dirty way, by saying nothing about scientific misconduct when it was right under their noses.

LIKE MR. PERAKH and Paul R. Gross, Jason Rosenhouse regards Richard Dawkins's misrepresentation of Nilsson and Pelger's work as a "minor error." Some minor, some error. What, may I ask, is the difference between inventing data out of whole cloth and inventing a computer simulation out of whole cloth? Should not evolutionary biologists be held to the same standards as physicists? Or even journalists? What part of the declaration that fraud is fraud does he fail to endorse? These are not semantic issues. If I claimed in print that Mr. Rosenhouse has four eyes, his denials would not turn on what I *meant*. Two eyes, I am sure he would say, are not there. Two eyes, and one computer simulation.

Mr. Rosenhouse believes that Nilsson and Pelger made an important discovery: namely, "that there is a smooth gradient of increasing visual acuity linking a light-sensitive spot to a lens-bearing eye." This is not their discovery, it is a restate-

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ment of their chief assumption. "The model sequence is made," they write, "such that every part of it, no matter how small, results in an increase of the spatial information the eye can detect" (p. 53). Note: *made*, not discovered.

To repeat, the flaw in Nilsson and Pelger's work to which I attach the greatest importance is that, as a defense of Darwinian theory, it makes no mention of Darwinian principles. Those principles demand that biological change be driven first by random variation and then by natural selection. There are no random variations in Nilsson and Pelger's theory. Whatever else their light-sensitive cells may be doing, they are not throwing down dice or flipping coins to figure out where they are going next.

Mr. Rosenhouse's conviction that the randomly occurring changes required by Darwin's theory are nevertheless "plainly implied" throughout Nilsson and Pelger's paper owes nothing to the facts and little to common sense. If changes in their model were really random, their temporal estimates would be apt to change by orders of magnitude, a point I made in my essay and again in my reply to Dan-E. Nilsson above. In my essay I also questioned Nilsson and Pelger's decision to hold selection pressure constant over time. In this, I found myself echoing John Gillespie (*The Causes of Molecular Evolution*, 1991, p. 294). "[W]e must be concerned," Gillespie writes, "with models of selection in variable environments. How could it be otherwise? Natural selection is a force adapting species to their environments. Environments are in a constant state of flux; selection coefficients must be in a constant state of flux as well." What is good enough for Gillespie is good enough for me.

In approving of the value chosen by Nilsson and Pelger for selection pressure, Mr. Rosenhouse writes that it is "ludicrously low for almost any environment." Is it indeed? The figure that Mr. Rosenhouse calls ludicrous, Nilsson and Pelger term pessimistic, and Mr. Gross reasonable. The correct term is arbitrary—as in, it is anyone's guess what the variance among a bunch of fish might have been a couple of million years ago. Studies of variance and heredity typically deal with tiny populations and small periods of time. Studying the collard flycatcher, *Ficedula albicollis*, Merilla, Kruuk, and Sheldon collected eighteen years of data for 17,171 nestlings in order to reach some quite modest quantitative conclusions (J. Merilla, L.E.B. Kruuk, and B.C. Sheldon, "Natural Selection on the Genetic Component of Variance in Body Condition in a Wild Bird Population," *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* 14, pp. 918-921, 2001). Nilsson and Pelger's imaginary population ranges over space and time in a way that could not possibly be disciplined by the data.

NICK MATZKE believes that Nilsson and Pelger provide a mathematical model for the development of the eye. Let us be honest: beyond a few finger-counting exercises, there is no mathematics in their model, and while their references do contain some legitimate mathematics (nothing beyond second-semester calculus, but also nothing to sneeze at), their references, as I have shown in patient detail, do not support their theory. The task of modeling the eye's complicated geometry from light-sensitive cell to fully functioning eye is utterly and completely beyond our powers, as a glance at any textbook dealing with embryology would show.

Mr. Matzke devotes the greater part of his otherwise interesting letter to doing battle with various "creationist straw men." It is useful work, I am sure, the more so since the creationists are never named. But whoever they are, I am not among them. Quite the contrary, I am as eager to do right by the snails as he is: why should he think otherwise? It is only when he passes to matters of fact that we part company.

Nilsson and Pelger's theory is intended to encompass the evolution of the eye in fish and cephalapods. Fish indisputably have bones, an attractive skull, and for the most part two staring eyes. The cephalochordate *Branchiostoma* (*Amphioxus* in a now out-of-date system of nomenclature) is widely taken by paleontologists to be a very plausible ancestral model to the vertebrates. It has certain vertebrate features while lacking others. These others include bones, a skull, a brain, and *paired sensory organs*: in other words, it has no eyes. Mr. Matzke's very confident assertion that cephalochordates have "primitive eyes" is simply untrue.

Now that I have swept away a few straw men of my own, let us see what is left to clean up. In my essay I wrote that Nilsson and Pelger made no attempt to discuss the cost-benefit payoffs associated with an improvement in visual acuity. My aim in discussing the reconstruction of the fish skull was not to argue that eyes came first *or* that bones did. Paired sensory organs *and* bones are characteristics of the vertebrates. Plainly they evolved together. Plainly, too, one function of the bony skull in vertebrates is to provide protection for the paired sensory organs located on their heads. The protection racket, as every Mafia boss is aware, does not come cheap; but Nilsson and Pelger, in adding up the benefits of visual acuity, did not ever bother to consider the vigorish. This is such an unobjectionable point that I cannot imagine why Mr. Matzke found it fishy.

I very much appreciate the letters from David Safir and Norman Gentieu.

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The Myth of "Settlements"

Are they indeed the "root cause" of violence in the Middle East?

One of the enduring myths about the Arab-Israeli conflict is that the "settlements" in Judea/Samaria (often called the "West Bank") are the source of the conflict between the Jews and the so-called "Palestinians." If that problem were solved—in other words, if Israel would turn Judea/Samaria over to the "Palestinians"—peace would prevail and the century-old conflict would be ended.

What are the facts?

Erroneous Assumptions: Various fallacies and erroneous assumptions underlie that belief, so often repeated that even those who are friendly to Israel, even many Jews in Israel and in the United States, have come to accept it. Our government, generally friendly to and supportive of Israel, has bought into the myth of the "settlements;" it has regularly and insistently requested that the "settlements" be abandoned and, one supposes, be turned over lock, stock, and barrel to those who are sworn to destroy Israel.

The very designation of the Jewish inhabitants of Judea/Samaria as "settlers" is inappropriate, because it connotes something foreign, intrusive and temporary, something that is purposefully and maliciously imposed. But that is nonsense of course. Why would the quarter-million Jews who live in Judea/Samaria be any more "intrusive" or any more "illegal" than the more than one million Arabs who live in peace in what is called "Israel proper" or west of the so-called "green line"? Nobody considers their presence as intrusive; nobody talks of them as an obstacle to peace.

> "Here is a thought: How about a deal by which the 'settlements' were indeed abandoned, all the Jews were to move to 'Israel proper' and all the Arabs living in Israel would be transferred to Judea/Samaria or to wherever else they wanted to go."

Most of us, regrettably perhaps, are too worldly and too "sophisticated" to put much stock in the argument that the territories in question, Judea and Samaria, are indeed the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people, that they were promised by God to Abraham and his seed in perpetuity. Jews have lived in that country without interruption since Biblical times. There is no reason why they shouldn't live there now. Why should Judea/Samaria be the only place in the world (except for such countries as Saudi Arabia) where Jews cannot live?

Legal Aspects: But how about the legal aspect of this matter? Isn't the "West Bank" "occupied territory" and therefore the Jews have no right to be there? But the historic reality is quite different. Very briefly: The Ottoman Empire was the sovereign in the entire area. After World War I, the British were awarded the Mandate over what was then called Palestine; it composed present-day Israel (including Judea/Samaria) and present-day Jordan. Article 6 of the Mandate "encouraged close settlement by the Jews on the land," including the lands of Judea/Samaria and Gaza (Yesha). That was later confirmed by the Balfour Declaration. Britain, for its own imperial reasons, separated 76 percent of the land—that lying beyond the Jordan River—to create the kingdom of Trans-Jordan (now Jordan) and made it inaccessible to Jews. In 1947, tired of the constant bloodletting between Arabs and Jews, the British threw in the towel and abandoned the Mandate. The UN took over. It devised a plan by which the land west of the Jordan River would be split between the Jews and the Arabs. The Jews, though with heavy heart, accepted the plan. The Arabs virulently rejected it and invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of five countries, so as to destroy it at its birth. Miraculously, the Jews prevailed and the State of Israel was born. When the smoke of battle cleared, Jordan was in possession of the West Bank and Egypt in possession of Gaza. They were the "occupiers" and they proceeded to kill many Jews and to drive out the rest. They systematically destroyed all Jewish holy places and all vestiges of Jewish presence. The area was "judenrein."

In the Six-Day War of 1967, the Jews reconquered the territories. The concept that Jewish presence in Judea/Samaria is illegal and that the Jews are occupiers is bizarre. It just has been repeated so often and with such vigor that many people have come to accept it.

How about the "Palestinians," whose patrimony this territory supposedly is and about whose olive trees and orange groves we hear endlessly? There is no such people. They are Arabs—the same people as in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and beyond. Most of them migrated into the territories and to "Israel proper," attracted by Jewish prosperity and industry. The concept of "Palestinians" as applied to Arabs and as a distinct nationality urgently in need of their own twenty-third Arab state, is a fairly new one; it was not invented until after 1948, when the State of Israel was founded.

But here's a thought: How about a deal by which the "settlements" were indeed abandoned and all the Jews were to move to "Israel proper." At the same time, all the Arabs living in Israel would be transferred to Judea/Samaria or to wherever else they wanted to go. That would indeed make Judea/Samaria "*judenrein*," and what are now Arab lands in Israel would be "*arabrein*." The Arabs could then live in a fully autonomous area in eastern Israel and peace, one would hope, would descend on the holy land.

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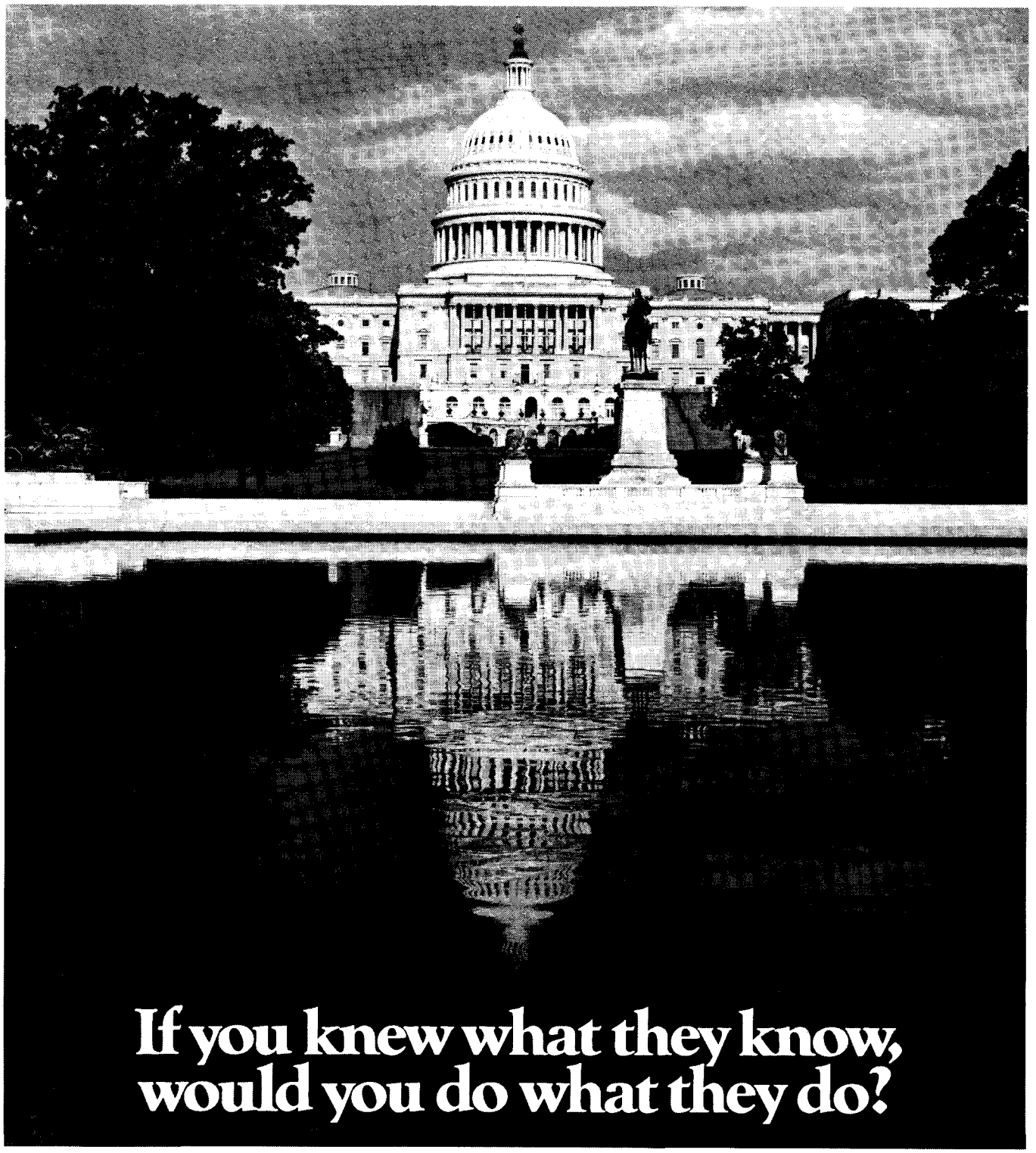

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Commentary
July-August 2003

Civil Liberties After 9/11

Robert H. Bork

When a nation faces deadly attacks on its citizens at home and abroad, it is only reasonable to expect that its leaders will take appropriate measures to increase security. And, since security inevitably means restrictions, it is likewise only reasonable to expect a public debate over the question of how much individual liberty should be sacrificed for how much individual and national safety.

That, however, is not the way our national debate has shaped up. From the public outcry over the Bush administration's measures to combat terrorism, one might suppose that America is well on the way to becoming a police state. A full-page newspaper ad by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), for instance, informs us that the Patriot Act, the administration's major security initiative, goes "far beyond fighting terrorism" and has "allowed government agents to violate our civil liberties—tapping deep into the private lives of innocent Americans." According to Laura W. Murphy, director of the ACLU's Washington office, Attorney General John Ashcroft has "clearly abused his power," "systematically erod[ing] free-speech rights, privacy rights, and due-process rights." From the libertarian Left, Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times Magazine* has charged President Bush with undermining safeguards for the accused in a way that Lewis "did not believe was possible in our country," while from the libertarian Right, William Safire has protested the administration's effort to realize "the supersnoop's dream" of spying on all Americans.

The charge that our civil liberties are being systematically dismantled must be taken seriously. America has, in the past, overreacted to perceived security threats; the Palmer raids after World War I and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II are the most notorious examples. Are we once again jeopardizing the liberties of all Americans while also inflicting particular harm on Muslims in our midst?

Civil libertarians insist that we are. They condemn the indignities of security checks at airports, the tracking of Muslim visitors to the U.S., detentions of suspects for indefinite periods without access to the courts, and, when criminal charges are brought, the government's attempt to limit the accused's access to important evidence. Still worse in their view is the administration's evident intention of using military tribunals to try suspected terrorists. Finally, and most frightening of all to critics, the government has proposed the Terrorism Information Awareness (TIA) program—initially and even more ominously known as the Total Information Awareness program—which would employ computers to gather and assess vast amounts of data relating to the transactions of, among others, unknowing American citizens.

There is no denying the rhetorical force of these

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accusations, or the success with which they have been used by the Left as a rallying cry against President Bush. What is less clear is their validity, not just on their own terms but in relation to the radically altered domestic security situation we have faced since the attacks of 9/11. There may be a case to be made concerning the measures we have taken so far; but it is not the one presented by the critics.

Security and Ethnic Profiling

ACCORDING TO Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, American Muslims have already lost many of their civil rights. "All Muslims are now suspects," Hooper has protested bitterly. The most salient outward sign of this is said to be the ethnic profiling that now occurs routinely in this country, particularly at airports but elsewhere as well—a form of discrimination widely considered to be self-evidently evil.

For most of us, airport security checks are the only first-hand experience we have with countermeasures to terrorism, and their intrusiveness and often seeming pointlessness have, not surprisingly, led many people to question such measures in general. But minor vexations are not the same as an assault on fundamental liberties. As for ethnic profiling, that is another matter, and a serious one. It is serious, however, not because it is rampant but because it does not exist.

That profiling is wicked *per se* is an idea that seems to have originated in connection with police work, when black civil-rights spokesmen began to allege that officers were relying on race as the sole criterion for suspecting someone of criminal activity. Profiling, in other words, equaled racism by definition. Yet, as Heather Mac Donald has demonstrated in *Are Cops Racist?*, the idea rests on a false assumption—namely, that crime rates are constant across every racial and ethnic component of our society. Thus, if blacks, who make up 11 percent of the population, are subject to 20 percent of all police stops on a particular highway, racial bias must be at fault.

But the truth is that (to stick to this particular example) blacks do speed more than whites, a fact that in itself justifies a heightened awareness of skin color as one of several criteria in police work. Of course, there is no excuse for blatant racism; but, as Mac Donald meticulously documents in case after case around the country, there is by and large no evidence that police have relied excessively on ethnic or racial profiling in conducting their normal investigations.

The stigma attached to profiling where it hardly exists has perversely carried over to an area where it should exist but does not: the war against terrorism. This war, let us remember, pre-dates 9/11. According to Mac Donald, when a commission on aviation security headed by then-Vice President Al Gore was considering a system that would take into account a passenger's national origin and ethnicity—by far the best predictors of terrorism—both the Arab lobby and civil libertarians exploded in indignation. The commission duly capitulated—which is why the final Computer-Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS) specified that such criteria as national origin, religion, ethnicity, and even gender were not to be taken into consideration.

This emasculated system did manage, even so, to pinpoint two of the September 11 terrorists on the day of their gruesome flight, but prevented any action beyond searching their luggage. As Mac Donald points out, had the system been allowed to utilize all relevant criteria, followed up by personal searches, the massacres might well have been averted.

Ironically, it is the very randomness of the new security checks that has generated so much skepticism about their efficacy. Old ladies, children, Catholic priests—all have been subject to searches of San Quentin-like thoroughness despite being beyond rational suspicion. According to the authorities, this randomness is itself a virtue, preventing would-be terrorists from easily predicting who or what will draw attention. But it is far more probable that frisking unlikely persons has nothing to do with security and everything to do with political correctness. Frightening as the prospect of terrorism may be, it pales, in the minds of many officials, in comparison with the prospect of being charged with racism.

Registration, Tracking, and Detention of Visitors

ETHNIC PROFILING, it is charged, is also responsible for the unjustified harassment and occasional detention of Arab and Muslim visitors to the United States. This is said to be an egregious violation not only of the rights of such persons but of America's traditional hospitality toward foreign visitors.

An irony here is that the procedures being deplored are hardly new, although they are being imposed with greater rigor. The current system has its roots in the 1950's in the first of a series of statutes ordering the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to require aliens from countries listed as state sponsors of terrorism, as well as from countries with a history of breeding terrorists, to

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register and be fingerprinted, to state where they will be while in the U.S., and to notify the INS when they change address or leave the country.

Historically, however, the INS has been absurdly lax about fulfilling its mandate. When a visitor with illegal status—someone, for example, thought to have overstayed a student visa or committed a crime—is apprehended, the usual practice of immigration judges has been to release him upon the posting of a bond, unless he is designated a "person of interest." In the latter case, he is held for deportation or criminal prosecution and given a handbook detailing his rights, which include access to an attorney. It is a matter of dispute whether the proceedings before an immigration judge can be closed, as authorities prefer, or whether they must be open; the Supreme Court has so far declined to review the practice.

The procedures are now being adhered to more strictly, and this is what has given rise to accusations of ethnic or religious profiling. But such charges are as beside the point as in the case of domestic police work, if not more so. There is indeed a correlation between detention and ethnicity or religion, but that is because most of the countries identified as state sponsors or breeders of terrorism are, in fact, populated by Muslims and Arabs.

Stricter enforcement has also led to backlogs, as the Justice Department has proved unable to deal expeditiously with the hundreds of illegal immigrants rounded up in the aftermath of September 11. A report by the department's inspector general, released in early June, found "significant problems" with the processing of these cases. There is no question that, in an ideal world, many of them would have been handled with greater dispatch, but it is also hardly surprising that problems that have long plagued our criminal justice system should reappear in the context of the fight against terrorism. In any case, the department has already taken steps to ameliorate matters. The only way for the problems to vanish would be for the authorities to cease doing their proper job; we have tried that route, and lived to regret it.

Discovery, Detention, and Prosecution of Suspected Terrorists

According to civil libertarians, the constitutional safeguards that normally protect individuals suspected of criminal activity have been destroyed in the case of persons suspected of links with terrorism. This accusation reflects an ignorance both of the Constitution and of long-established limits on the criminal-justice system.

Prior to 1978, and dating back at least to World War II, attorneys general of the United States routinely authorized warrantless FBI surveillance, wire taps, and break-ins for national-security purposes. Such actions were taken pursuant to authority delegated by the President as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and as the officer principally responsible for the conduct of foreign affairs. The practice was justified because obtaining a warrant in each disparate case resulted in inconsistent standards and also posed unacceptable risks. (In one notorious instance, a judge had read aloud in his courtroom from highly classified material submitted to him by the government; even under more conscientious judges, clerks, secretaries, and others were becoming privy to secret materials.)

Attorneys general were never entirely comfortable with these warrantless searches, whose legality had never been confirmed by the Supreme Court. The solution in 1978 was the enactment of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Henceforth, sitting district court judges would conduct secret hearings to approve or disapprove government applications for surveillance.

A further complication arose in the 1980's, however, when, by consensus of the Department of Justice and the FISA court, it was decided that the act authorized the gathering of foreign intelligence only for its own sake ("primary purpose"), and not for the possible criminal prosecution of any foreign agent. The effect was to erect a "wall" between the gathering of intelligence and the enforcement of criminal laws. But last year, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review held that the act did not, in fact, preclude or limit the government's use of that information in such prosecutions. In the opinion of the court, arresting and prosecuting terrorist agents or spies might well be the best way to inhibit their activities, as the threat of prosecution might persuade an agent to cooperate with the government, or enable the government to "turn" him.

When the wall came down, Justice Department prosecutors were able to learn what FBI intelligence officials already knew. This contributed to the arrest of Sami al-Arian, a professor at the University of South Florida, on charges that he raised funds for Palestinian Islamic Jihad and its suicide bombers. Once the evidence could be put at the disposition of prosecutors, al-Arian's longstanding claim that he was being persecuted by the authorities as an innocent victim of anti-Muslim prejudice was shattered.

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Treatment of Captured Terrorists

ACCORDING TO critics, by depriving certain captured individuals of access to lawyers, and by holding them without filing charges, the government is violating the Geneva Convention's protections of lawful combatants or prisoners of war. This is nonsense.

Four criteria must be met to qualify a person as a lawful combatant. He must be under the command of a person responsible for his subordinates; wear a fixed distinctive emblem recognizable at a distance; carry arms openly; and conduct operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war. The men the United States has captured and detained so far do not meet these criteria.

The government's policy is as follows: if a captured unlawful enemy combatant is believed to have further information about terrorism, he can be held without access to legal counsel and without charges being filed. Once the government is satisfied that it has all the relevant information it can obtain, the captive can be held until the end of hostilities, or be released, or be brought up on charges before a criminal court.

The government chose one of these options when it charged John Lindh, an American citizen who fought with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Zacarias Moussaoui, who is thought to have been involved in the planning for September 11, with crimes. Lindh entered into a plea agreement under which he was sentenced to twenty years in prison. Moussaoui's case has proved more complicated. The government proposes to use only unclassified materials in its prosecution, but Moussaoui, a French citizen of Moroccan heritage who has admitted in open court to belonging to al Qaeda and swearing allegiance to Osama bin Laden, has demanded to see classified materials and to have access to other captured terrorists for the preparation of his defense.

For obvious reasons, Moussaoui's demands are unacceptable to the government, which does not want to divulge classified information or allow terrorists to communicate with each other. But the prosecutors' offer of an alternative procedure was rejected by the presiding judge. If the government continues to be unsuccessful in its determination to protect classified information, it may decide to prosecute Moussaoui in special military tribunals created for trying terrorists. That would surely trigger the outrage of civil libertarians, even though it is plainly arguable that Moussaoui could and perhaps should have been prosecuted there in the first place. I will return to this issue below.

In a somewhat separate category from Lindh and Moussaoui, both of whom have been charged with actual crimes, are the cases of two American citizens who have been detained rather than brought to trial because the government believes they possess undivulged valuable information. Yaser Esam Hamdi remains confined to the Norfolk Naval Brig, and José Padilla is confined at the Consolidated Naval Brig in Charleston. Neither man has yet been charged.

Hamdi filed a petition for habeas corpus challenging the legality of his detention. Although he was captured in Afghanistan, where he was carrying an AK-47 during a time of active military hostilities, and although he was classified by the executive branch as an unlawful enemy combatant, Hamdi claimed the full protections of the Constitution as an American citizen. He argued that his detention without charge and without access to a judicial tribunal or the right to counsel was in violation of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.

The Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit held otherwise. Although the detention of U.S. citizens is subject to judicial review, that review must be "deferential." The Constitution explicitly confers war powers on the political branches; in going to war in Afghanistan, the President had relied both on those powers and on Congress's authorization of "all necessary and appropriate force" against nations, organizations, or persons he determined to be involved in terrorist attacks. Hamdi, the court said, was indeed an enemy combatant subject to detention. It elaborated its rationale:

> The detention of enemy combatants serves at least two vital purposes. First, detention prevents enemy combatants from rejoining the enemy and continuing to fight against America and its allies. . . . In this respect, "captivity is neither a punishment nor an act of vengeance," but rather "a simple war measure."
>
> Second, detention in lieu of prosecution may relieve the burden on military commanders of litigating the circumstances of a capture halfway around the globe. . . . As the Supreme Court has recognized [in *Johnson* v. *Eisentrager* (1950)], "it would be difficult to devise more effective fettering of a field commander than to allow the very enemies he is ordered to reduce to submission to call him to account in his own civil courts and divert his efforts and attention from the military offensive abroad to the legal defense at home."

Hamdi's petition was denied, as was his right of access to an attorney or to seeing government documents.

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Padilla was arrested upon his arrival at Chicago's O'Hare airport from Pakistan. The government indicted him, claiming he planned acts of terrorism, including the explosion of a radioactive "dirty bomb." When, like Hamdi, he petitioned for habeas corpus, the court held similarly that "the President is authorized under the Constitution and by law to direct the military to detain enemy combatants." Nevertheless, and over the government's objection, the court said it would allow Padilla the assistance of counsel to litigate the facts surrounding his capture and detention. (The government is now appealing this.) At the same time, the court disallowed the presence of counsel at Padilla's interrogations, and averred that the government need only show "some evidence" to prevail.

Anthony Lewis went ballistic. It is, he wrote, a "fundamental truth" that an individual cannot get justice against the state without the effective help of a lawyer, and this truth was "being challenged in a way that I did not believe was possible in our country." But Lewis was completely wrong. Despite his attempt to conflate the two categories, detention is not punishment; its purpose, rather, is to prevent members of enemy forces from causing harm while hostilities are in progress. Nor is Padilla the subject of a criminal proceeding; criminal law rules do not apply when detention of an enemy is ordered by the President under his war powers. Hundreds of thousands of *lawful* prisoners of war have been held by the United States without the right to a lawyer, and unlawful enemy combatants are entitled to even fewer rights.

This makes perfect sense. A judicial system with rights of due process is crucial to a free society, but it is not designed for the protection of enemies engaged in armed conflict against us. Nor can we divert resources from the conduct of a war to the trial of every POW or unlawful combatant who wants to litigate. Besides, giving someone like Padilla a lawyer would frustrate the very purpose of his detention, and place American lives in danger. A lawyer's duty, acting within the bounds of ethical behavior, is to create delay and confusion, keeping alive his client's hopes of going free. Armed with such hopes, Padilla would be all the less likely to divulge what he knew, and plans for future terrorist attacks might thereby go undetected.

It might be argued that Padilla is not like other unlawful enemy combatants because he is a U.S. citizen taken on American soil. But the Supreme Court disposed of that distinction as long ago as 1942 in *Ex parte Quirin*. In that case, German would-be saboteurs had entered the U.S. illegally with the intention of attacking war industries and facilities. Upon capture, they sought habeas corpus, claiming a right to trial before a regular court rather than a military tribunal. In denying the petition, the Court deemed it irrelevant that one of the captives claimed U.S. citizenship and was on U.S. soil when apprehended.

This is where there is a role for military tribunals, an institution that has played an important and honorable part in American jurisprudence throughout our history. In *Quirin*, the Court made clear that such tribunals rightly enjoy a separate constitutional track from grand juries and trial by jury, which "at the time of the adoption of the Constitution [were] familiar parts of the machinery for criminal trials in the civil courts." Quite properly, however, the procedures followed by these civil institutions were, and had to be, "unknown to military tribunals[,] which are not courts in the sense of the judiciary articles" of the Constitution.

Consistent with this understanding, military tribunals have been used by several Presidents in time of war. In the Revolutionary War, before there even was a Constitution, George Washington employed them freely. So did Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War, and Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II. Although we remember the Nuremberg trial, with its many trappings of a civilian court, the victorious Allies did not always regard such open trials as the only or preferred method of proceeding. As the legal scholar Mark Martins reminds us, "German regular army soldiers were also defendants in many of the thousands of military courts and commissions convened by the Allies after the war in different zones of occupation."

In any event, the image of military tribunals as drumhead courts manned by stony-faced officers ready to convict regardless of the evidence is a fantasy. In reality, military courts may achieve just and equitable results *more* frequently than the run of civilian juries. Military judges tend to be more scrupulous in weighing evidence, in resisting emotional appeals, and in respecting the plain import of the laws. There are no Lance Itos or Johnny Cochrans in military trials. If, as the war against the terrorists drags on, we are forced to have recourse to military tribunals, there may well be clear gains for both justice and security.

There are, to be sure, costs to be paid for going the route of military courts. It was no doubt partly out of a desire to placate critics, both at home and abroad, that President Bush first announced that U.S. citizens would be tried in our regular courts, and that the decision was made to try even Moussaoui in a federal district court. In the future, moreover, some of our allies may refuse to extradite captured terrorists if it is known they are likely to land before a military tribunal.

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But the critics show every sign of being implacable, and in any case the cost of staying with the civil route is likely to be higher. In a district court a defense attorney will almost inevitably demand access to classified information; continued disclosure of such information in court would inform not only Muslim terrorists but all the world's intelligence services of the information we have and our methods of gathering it. If compromising national security is one alternative that may be forced on government by the demand for access to classified material, the other is to drop charges. Neither alternative is acceptable.

The Terrorist Information Awareness Program

AMONG MENACES to American liberty, this has been widely held to be the most sinister of all. Here is William Safire:

> Every purchase you make with a credit card, every magazine subscription you buy and medical prescription you fill, every website you visit and e-mail you send or receive, every academic grade you receive, every bank deposit you make, every trip you book and every event you attend—all these transactions and communications will go into what the Defense Department describes as "a virtual, centralized grand database."
>
> To this computerized dossier on your private life from commercial sources, add every piece of information that government has about you—passport application, driver's license and bridge toll records, judicial and divorce records, complaints from nosy neighbors to the F.B.I., your lifetime paper trail plus the latest hidden camera surveillance—and you have the supersnoop's dream.

What is the reality? The Terrorist Information Awareness program (TIA) is still only in a developmental stage; we do not know whether it can even be made to work. If it can, it might turn out to be one of the most valuable weapons in America's war with terrorists.

In brief, the program would seek to identify patterns of conduct that indicate terrorist activity. This entails separating small sets of transactions from a vast universe of similar transactions. Since terrorists use the same avenues of communication, commerce, and transportation that everybody else uses, the objective is to build a prototype of an intelligence system whose purpose would be to find terrorists' signals in a "sea of noise." Taking advantage of the integrative power of computer technology, the system would allow the government to develop hypotheses about possible terrorist activity, basing itself entirely on data that are *already legally available.*

But we may never find out whether the program's objective can be achieved, since TIA has been effectively gutted in advance. Impressed, no doubt, by the ideological breadth of the opposition to TIA, Congress was led to adopt a vague prohibition, sponsored by Democratic Senator Ron Wyden, draining TIA of much of its value. The amendment specifies that the program's technology may be used for military operations outside the U.S. and for "lawful foreign intelligence activities conducted wholly against non-United States persons." By inference, TIA may therefore *not* be used to gather information about U.S. citizens or resident aliens—despite the clear fact that significant number of persons in these categories have ties to terrorist groups.

Writing in *National Journal*, Stuart Taylor, Jr. has offered a hypothetical instance of how the Wyden amendment can cripple intelligence gathering. Suppose the government learns that elements of a deadly gas have been smuggled into the U.S. on flights from Germany by unidentified al-Qaeda operatives during a particular time frame. A TIA-based query of foreign databases might generate a list of possible terrorists. The Wyden amendment, however, would prohibit a search for the names of any who might be Americans, and might even put beyond reach any mixed databases that happened to include Americans. It would similarly bar looking in U.S. databases for passengers on the relevant flights whose names are also on government databases of known or suspected terrorists. Likewise out-of-bounds would be queries directed at legally accessible *commercial* databases—asking, for example, about purchases of canisters suitable for the deployment of the deadly gas.

Are there techniques that could be devised to prevent TIA from becoming the playground of Safire's hypothetical supersnoop without disabling it altogether? In domestic criminal investigations, courts require warrants for electronic surveillances. As we have seen, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act also requires judicial approval of surveillances for intelligence and counterintelligence purposes. While there would be no need for a warrant-like requirement in initiating a computer search, other safeguards can be imagined for TIA. Among them, according to Taylor, might be "software designs and legal rules that would block human agents from learning the identities of people whose transactions are being 'data-mined' by TIA computers unless the agents can obtain judicial warrants by showing something analogous to the 'probable cause' that the law requires to justify a wiretap."

Critics of TIA have made much of another cir-

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cumstance—that the technology is being developed by a Defense Department agency known as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), headed by Dr. John Poindexter. A former Navy admiral, Poindexter was convicted of lying to Congress in the 1980's in connection with the Iran-*contra* affair. It is hardly clear, however, what relevance this has to the development of software for TIA, and in any case, if and when the development succeeds, TIA will be operated by another agency and Poindexter will have nothing further to do with it.

Still another line of criticism zeroes in on constitutional issues that may arise under the First and Fourth Amendments. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act has already dealt with the former—protecting the free-speech rights of Americans—by providing that "no United States person may be considered a foreign power or an agent of a foreign power solely upon the basis of activities protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution"; a similar provision could be made to apply to TIA. As for the Fourth Amendment, which guarantees freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures, TIA is designed to acquire information not from individuals or other entities but only from other government agencies and third parties (such as credit agencies) to which the information has already been divulged or that have themselves conducted a search. As the Supreme Court held in *Smith* v. *Maryland* (1979), an individual "has no legitimate expectation of privacy in information he voluntarily turns over to third parties." We limit or waive our rights to privacy all the time, by, for example, giving financial records to a bank, filling out a public questionnaire, or dialing a phone number.

The benefits of the TIA program are palpable, and potentially invaluable; the hazards are either hyped or imaginary. There is nothing to prevent Congress from replacing the Wyden amendment with oversight provisions, or from requiring reasonable safeguards that would preserve the program's efficacy.

What Remains to be Done

THE FACT that opponents of the Bush administration's efforts to protect American security have resorted to often shameless misrepresentation and outright scaremongering does not mean those efforts are invulnerable to criticism. They are indeed vulnerable—for not going far enough.

In addition to the lack of properly targeted security procedures at airports, and the failure to resist the gutting of TIA, a truly gaping deficiency in our arrangements is the openness of our northern and southern borders to illegal entrants. In the south, reportedly, as many as 1,000 illegal aliens *a day* enter through Arizona's Organ Pipe National Monument park, where they have become so brazen that they have cleared their own private roads. In the north, there are plenty of easily accessible and unmanned entry points from Canada. So far, Washington has not adequately responded to calls for more park-ranger staffing and military assistance, let alone addressed the lamentable condition of our immigration procedures in general.

There is, in short, plenty of work to go around. The war we are in, like no other we have ever faced, may last for decades rather than years. The enemy blends into our population and those of other nations around the world, attacks without warning, and consists of men who are quite willing to die in order to kill us and destroy our civilization. Never before has it been possible to imagine one suicidal individual, inspired by the promise of paradise and armed with a nuclear device, able to murder tens or even hundreds of thousands of Americans in a single attack. Those facts justify what the administration has already done, and urgently require more.

Of course, to say this, or to question the arguments of critics, is to risk being accused of censorship, actual or preemptive, or even McCarthyism. Here is an article in the *New York Times* raising the alarm about statements by Attorney General John Ashcroft:

> In the past, Mr. Ashcroft has gone so far as to question the loyalty of those who challenge the constitutionality of his tactics. In a defining moment in December 2001 at a Senate hearing, Mr. Ashcroft declared: "To those who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: your tactics only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. They give ammunition to America's enemies, and pause to America's friends."

As it happens, "phantoms of lost liberty" is a perfectly apt description for much of the commentary that has been offered on the administration's initiatives. It is demonstrably true, moreover, that people who recklessly exaggerate the threat to our liberties in the fight against terrorism do give ammunition, moral and otherwise, to our enemies. Asserting as much does not impugn the loyalty of such people. They are perfectly free to say what they think, and as loudly as they please. But neither should they themselves be immune from criticism, even by a government official.

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The Chinese Sickness

Arthur Waldron

THE STRANGE synergy between Chinese misrepresentations of reality and the Western desire to believe those misrepresentations takes many forms, but for the latest example one need look no farther than the still-uncontrolled epidemic in China of the viral illness abbreviated as SARS. The misrepresentations began last November, or possibly before, when Chinese officials became aware of this hitherto unknown disease and the death toll it was exacting. For fully six months—the crucial period during which an epidemic may be contained, or may spread out of control—Beijing responded with secrecy, denial, and cover-up. And for exactly that long, the denial worked.

Then, on April 20, the government put on a show of coming clean. Some officials were reassigned, the World Health Organization (WHO) was allowed in, and new statistics about the number of cases were published, larger by a factor of ten than their predecessors. But soon it became clear that the new candor was partial at best. WHO officials complained about a continuing lack of information concerning numbers and locations of patients, especially within the huge Chinese military, even as an estimated two million people fled from infected areas to the countryside and as Beijing Central Television showed soldiers parading by, rank after rank, assault rifles across their chests, singing "We shall certainly defeat SARS"—as if military action had some role in disease control. On May 23, Beijing finally stated that the total so far was 5,285 cases confirmed in China, 1,714 suspected, and 303 deaths. Meanwhile, SARS was demonstrating its tenacity by spreading in Taiwan and reappearing in Singapore and Canada—three countries possessing incomparably better public-health services than China.

In the case of any other country than China, surely, Western commentators would early on have recognized a crisis of potentially mammoth proportions, and raised an appropriate alarm. But in this case, the response was largely muted, and, when the scare became real, even Pollyannish. Indeed, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* published news stories seeking in some way to portray the epidemic in China as, if not in fact a positive good, at least the source of potential benefit, an occasion for genuine reform. Not only had the crisis set "a new standard of public disclosure," went a typical mid-May dispatch in the *Times*, but, thanks to it, "some party thinkers" were seeing an opportunity to put into place a number of "long-discussed proposals to allow a modest increase in press freedom, improve public oversight of officials, and promote more democracy inside the ruling party."

By late May, it was clear that such hopes were

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themselves misplaced. The party was controlling information about the virus more closely than ever, and as for political change, SARS was not bringing it. "Mary Poppins journalism," was the memorable phrase used by the Washington-based newsletter *China Weekly Fax Bulletin* to dismiss the reports in Western papers. It was an apt characterization. When it comes to dealing with China, many people both in the media and in the policy-making circles of government, not to mention in business, seem to have convinced themselves that a spoonful of sugar is all you need to help the medicine go down.

The syndrome is not new; nor is it specific to China. But it is particularly dangerous today. China is an immense country, containing hundreds of thousands of potential refugees and enough guns, ambitious politicians, and frustrated citizens to feed a gigantic domestic conflict. Happy stories about economic growth and liberalization notwithstanding, China has problems—serious problems—with its people, its economy, its environment, and its neighbors. These would be difficult to resolve under any regime; the current regime not only fails to resolve them, it exacerbates them.

Much the same could have been said about the Soviet Union in its final two decades. Indeed, it *was* said, although mostly by Soviet dissident writers whose works were ignored by the Western academic and government establishment. It took the Chernobyl disaster to shake some experts from their complacency, and it may be that the SARS crisis will yet do the same for some China experts today. But the precedents are not encouraging.

With the USSR, the Western establishment snoozed while the local dissidents predicted crisis and collapse. When collapse came, governments everywhere were stunned into paralysis; then, when they finally did begin to act, it was not to facilitate change but—as in the famous "Chicken Kiev" speech of the first President Bush—to plead for it to stop. Today, as a similar crisis of governance brews in China, Western political establishments are if anything even less aware and less prepared than they were in the Soviet case. Nor can we necessarily count on the Chinese leadership suddenly to produce a constellation of Gorbachevs and Yakovlevs and Yeltsins.

Luckily, for anyone wishing to be informed, there is no dearth of useful and illuminating work being done. China now faces two distinct, but linked, sets of problems. One set begins at home, where the economy is doing far less well than most people recognize while political, social, and even comprehensive economic reforms remain absent. The second set, converging from abroad, comprises the ever-mounting reactions of China's neighbors to its relentless military buildup and its bullying behavior. For the domestic situation, a new book by Ross Terrill, *The New Chinese Empire*, is a particularly insightful guide.* For the international context, Robyn Lim's *The Geopolitics of East Asia* is no less helpful.†

Since his first visit to China in 1964, Terrill, who divides his time between Harvard and the University of Texas, has proved himself a conscientious scholar as well as a prolific writer, his talents ranging from travel reportage (initially highly favorable to China), to biography (of both Mao and his wife), to political analysis. *The New Chinese Empire* may be his most interesting book yet.

Terrill begins with reflections on what he calls the "power and peculiarity" of the Chinese state. These two words, power and peculiarity, pretty well capture the features that render China today both an exception to nearly every international pattern and, at the same time, vulnerable to seemingly hairline fissures that may (in Terrill's well-considered judgment) bring the entire edifice crashing down.

The state whose capital is Beijing is one of the last "party-states" in the world, in the sense that it is run not by the visible government but by a secret, self-perpetuating, and ideologically defined party. (Even the People's Liberation Army reports to the party, not the government.) Furthermore, the People's Republic of China is, as Terrill writes, "the last remaining major multicultural empire." With the ethnic Chinese in charge, Beijing holds Tibet in thrall just as, before it, Moscow held Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In the West, Beijing rules the Uighurs, "a Turkic people alien to Chinese culture who preceded the [Chinese] in what is now the 'autonomous area' of Xinjiang."

Can it last? Communism is now thoroughly discredited in China, but the party will not let go of the state. The empire is growing ever more difficult to hold; fully a million Chinese troops occupy Xinjiang, writes Terrill, yet resistance continues. No one in the West wants China to explode or collapse—"stability" is the word on most lips—but most scenarios for change are unrealistic in the extreme. Terrill quotes former President Bill Clinton in 1988:

> "What I would like to see is the present government, headed by this president and this pre-

* *The New Chinese Empire: And What It Means for the United States.* Basic, 384 pp., $30.00.

† *The Geopolitics of East Asia: The Search for Equilibrium.* Routledge-Curzon, 198 pp., $80.00.

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mier [Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji, respectively], who are clearly committed to reform, ride the wave of change and take China fully into the 21st century."

The trouble, as Terrill richly documents, is that China's leaders have not been and are not now true reformers, in the sense that even Mikhail Gorbachev, for example, was a reformer (albeit still a believing Communist). Jiang Zemin, with his seemingly endless tenure in office, his vanity, and his proclivity for vacuous sloganeering as the storm clouds gather, is (Terrill points out) much more like Leonid Brezhnev. Can one, then, count on China's alleged economic miracle to pull it through?

UNTIL SARS came along, most people thought so, and most people also thought that the miracle was real. Even today, if you throw a brick on Wall Street you will probably hit someone in a banker's suit who genuinely believes that China has been growing at a record pace and will continue to do so—indeed, that it is likely to become the motor for Asian and even world development. Over the past twenty years, such people, and their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan, have poured roughly $450 billion in direct investment into China.

What return they will get on this investment remains to be seen, however. Money is made in China by shipping components there to be processed for re-export. With its immense pool of skilled labor, no nonsense about workers' rights or unions, and a police force willing to crack heads, coastal China is an ideal "platform" for foreign business. Nevertheless, China's world trade, which today stands at a little over $250 billion per year, is only a little greater as a percentage of world trade than what it was in the 1920's (though of course much bigger in absolute terms than it was in 1960). Fully half of that figure, moreover, is accounted for by businesses in which foreigners have ownership. While, for Chinese workers, jobs in such processing industries are undoubtedly better than urban unemployment or rural poverty, the sector lacks what economists call backward and forward linkages. The rising tide lifts only the coast.

With the foreign-run sector removed from the picture, the rest of China's economy looks distinctly unhealthy. As Terrill observes, private enterprise is everywhere discouraged, and the state sector, which operates largely at a loss and is shrinking in its share of the economy, continues to grow in absolute size in a way that threatens everything else.

A symptom of the underlying malaise is that those Chinese whose incomes are rising prefer to put their money in state banks (the only kind there is) rather than to buy things. There are two reasons for this: prices in certain areas are falling, which leads people to wait for a better buy, and many of the goods being produced are not anything anyone wants to buy. (Visit any of the vast state-run Chinese Product emporiums and you will see many idle employees, heaps of carpets and well-stocked shelves, and an almost complete lack of customers.) Failure to sell means that state enterprises lose money; to avoid bankruptcy, the state forces its banks to make irrecoverable loans to its enterprises, which are thus enabled to produce even more things that no one wants to buy. The result, long noted by some specialists, is that China's banks are in fact insolvent while the state sector continues to waste the precious capital the banks pour into it.

Terrill's analysis is usefully complemented here by other findings. According to Thomas Rawski of the University of Pittsburgh, at least since 1998 the Chinese government has been both falsifying statistics and taking heroic stimulative measures in order to maintain an illusion of growth, crucial for both domestic and foreign confidence. In addition to instructing state banks to lend money to state enterprises, the government itself has begun borrowing in order to finance "development" projects that, as long as they are being worked on, count as positive contributions to the national product. Few of these projects make sense economically: as in Japan (whose problems are similar to China's but less pressing because the Japanese have so much more money to waste), they tend to be things like government buildings, tunnels, and unneeded airports and rail lines. In China, unlike in Japan, the results are usually shoddy, and are aptly dubbed *dofu char*: building with the dregs from the manufacture of soybean cakes. Cracks in the Three Gorges ("Great China") dam, a flagship state project, have so far defied all efforts at repair.

Of course it is true that private commerce and entrepreneurship are developing in China, particularly in the south, and even in the teeth of state policies intended to maintain control of the economy. And everyone also knows that real private enterprise, free capital markets, genuine banks, and so forth are the only institutions capable of lifting China's economy and providing work for its people. But for political reasons the government is intent on preventing these institutions from achieving full reality. Terrill quotes the Chinese-born economist Huang Yasheng, now at Harvard: "It matters greatly whether the Chinese government

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believes in capitalism, or whether it just wants to play around on the fringes." Terrill himself has no doubt on this score—Beijing, he writes, "merely seeks to use capitalism for authoritarian purpose"—and I think he is correct.

On the subject of the economy, Terrill adds still more worrisome details. One concerns the poverty and stagnation of the countryside. Farmers today are effectively outside the world of the party-state: the government provides few services, leaving them to eke out wretched livings on their own or migrate to the wealthier coast, there to provide cheap labor and a growing reservoir of discontent. Then there is the ecological crisis: polluted and increasingly scarce water, air increasingly unfit to breathe. And corruption: pervasive from top to bottom, the worst by far in China's long history. In one carefully staged arrest, the mayor of Shenyang (Mukden), the capital of Liaoning province and a center of heavy industry, was found to be in possession of gold bars worth $6 million. (His salary amounted to $3,500 a year.) This is hardly evidence of a government "clearly committed," in the words of the hapless Clinton, "to reform."

No less off-target was the former President's call for the indefinite continuation of rule by Jiang and Zhu. In this connection, Terrill rightly lays stress on a basic and enduring irony: while an American President is free to express his opinion on the matter of who should rule China, no one has ever asked the Chinese *their* opinion. Not only are there no elections; there is not even a systematized autocracy. In the entire history of the People's Republic, no political succession has ever been carried out according to the mechanisms prescribed by party rules. All such turnovers—to install Deng Xiaoping, to oust Zhao Ziyang, to impose Jiang Zemin—have depended ultimately on military intervention; only in the recent partial shift from Jiang to Hu Jintao have we so far failed to see actual violence.

Can *this* continue forever? And if not, can China, as Clinton and many others suggest, somehow just muddle its way from dictatorship to democracy? Terrill puts the choices much more precisely: can China *evolve* from its autocratic state, or must the polity *crash*, as the imperial system crashed in 1911-1912 (when the Qing was forced, by the army, to abdicate) and as the Soviet Union crashed? And what would such a crash look like? His response:

> A common view among Western Sinologists is that if Beijing drives off the cliff gradually, no one will notice. I believe the Chinese populace and the rest of the world really will notice when the CCP [Chinese Communist party] loses its monopoly of political power. No regime in Chinese history has ever given up power without bloodshed. I do not believe the CCP party-state will be the first.

This is the sort of change that will shake the world, though we cannot predict just how. Among the factors complicating our vision is China's second set of problems—the external ones. And that is where Robyn Lim comes in. In *The Geopolitics of East Asia*, Lim, formerly a member of Australia's intelligence services and now a professor in Japan, provides some much needed background and a compelling interpretive framework. Like Terrill's, her approach is somewhat unconventional but exactly right. Where he begins with the state, she focuses on strategic geography, force structures, and military and diplomatic choices, using these to construct a portrait of the Asian situation as it has developed over the past century and more.

In particular, Lim zeroes in on the interactions of four players: China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. These she labels the "East Asian quadrilateral," a term reminiscent of the celebrated quadrilateral of fortified cities in northern Italy that long served as a stable foundation for Hapsburg power. But stability is not the quality to be associated with Lim's quadrilateral. At least since Japan and China first clashed in 1894-95, there has been conflict after conflict among the four members, making for a long, patternless succession of crises that have never arrived at balance or resolution—except when one has been imposed from across the Pacific by the United States.

Lim's purpose is less to narrate or describe than to locate the fundamental strategic issues, an intellectual challenge that she makes look easy. She begins with the clash between the two core areas of China and Japan, deceptively quiescent today but still the main event just as it was in traditional times, and one that has cost millions of lives. Russia entered the picture as long ago as the 18th century, pushing through territories claimed by the Qing dynasty and by 1740 controlling the Kamchatka peninsula, which nicely flanks both Manchuria and Japan.

The fourth member of the quadrilateral and the last to appear on the scene is the United States, which, though not part of Asia, depends for its security on the peace of Asia—a peace that, as Lim demonstrates, it must also provide. Yet even today

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the American presence in Asia is thin and diffuse: compare our handful of bilateral alliances in that part of the world with the dense inter-operative structure of NATO, or the relatively few military bases available to us in the area from Japan to the equator with all those to which we have access in Europe. The pressing question of "how East Asia's strategic geography bears on the interests of the United States as the dominant maritime power," in Lim's formulation, is one that has been around for more than a century, but it has yet to be definitively analyzed in Washington or made the basis of far-reaching policy.

As Lim well understands, American involvement in Asia has always been reactive, not proactive. Indeed, she traces the history of this essential posture from our seizure of the Philippines in 1898 ("carried out largely in order to prevent Germany or Japan from taking possession of these islands"), through the Washington Conference of 1921-22 (to this day the most concerted international attempt to create a security regime for Asia), through Pearl Harbor, World War II, and the cold war as it unfolded in Asia. What emerges from Lim's often masterful pages is a vivid sense of, above all, American strategic unpreparedness and the consequent need to scramble, often without success, for partial and after-the-fact solutions.

In addition to sketching the strategic relations among members of the quadrilateral over the past century, Lim devotes some trenchant passages to China's own current condition, and specifically to the series of belligerent actions in recent years that have so alarmed its neighbors and rivals and, she believes, helped turned the tide against China. This topic marks the spot where the arguments of Terrill's and Lim's books come together. It also raises the most disquieting of prospects. For if it is the case, as both of these authors suggest in their separate ways, that a combination of external belligerence and internal weakness is making the People's Republic look more and more like the once-mighty Qing at the point of entering its period of terminal decline, it is surely no less clear that, as far as the U.S. is concerned, we have only fitfully begun to prepare ourselves for the challenge ahead.

THE EVIDENCE for China's external belligerence, much of it rehearsed by both Lim and Terrill, is abundant enough. That evidence includes Beijing's continuing challenges to South Korean and Japanese territorial waters; its seizures of the Paracel Islands from Vietnam and of Mischief Reef from the Philippines; its unrelenting attempt to intimidate Taiwan by the buildup—and firing—of ballistic missiles directly across from the island. Each of these risky and totally unprovoked Chinese moves has been met, until recently, not by resistance but by acquiescence.

The conclusion to which all this points is aptly summarized by Terrill: "China *itself wants to be the hegemon.*" And there is more to come. Over the next year or two, China will begin deploying, probably in unexpectedly large numbers, a new generation of sophisticated nuclear-armed ballistic missiles (capable, among other things, of incinerating the continental United States). These will join an already impressive array of ultra-quiet submarines, state-of-the-art-fighter aircraft, destroyers, and missiles optimized to attack U.S. carrier forces, as well as greatly improved command-and-control systems using hardened fiber-optic networks. Russia has sold much of this new military equipment to China. But the U.S., both wittingly and unwittingly, has also done a lot to improve China's military communications, missiles, and nuclear warheads.

As both Newton and Clausewitz instruct us, however, actions elicit reactions, and the last few years have also seen a cascade of events that have begun to pull the ground out from under the Chinese attempt at hegemony. The most important of these was China's gratuitous mismanagement of relations with its most important southern neighbor, India; this ended in a series of Indian nuclear tests that literally and figuratively shook the ground between them. How China allowed this crucial relationship to unravel is hard to explain, but in any future conflict the Chinese now face a potential second front: a peer competitor, already a democracy and of growing military and economic potency. This is, arguably, the biggest single strategic disaster for China since its failure to establish relations with the United States in 1949.

At almost the same time, Beijing's military threats against Taiwan yielded unwelcome fruit in President Bush's statement that the United States would do "whatever it took" to defend the island from Chinese attack—a statement backed up, at long last, by a sustained U.S. initiative to help the people of Taiwan repair their much deteriorated military. Again, Beijing brought this setback on itself. Had it engaged Taiwan's elected government, some sort of modus vivendi could almost certainly have been worked out; instead, as with India, it chose to stonewall and threaten. Bush had to react, and he did—with a clarity that may have saved the world from war even as it put the seal on Taiwan's effective independence.

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And now, in the emergence of a nuclear-armed North Korea, there has lately come what may turn out to be the most damaging of all the reactions to China's recent foreign policy. This development poses both direct and indirect threats to Chinese territory, and yet it too is a crisis Beijing helped to create. It was Mao Zedong, after all, who insisted on supporting Kim Il-Sung's invasion of the South way back when; ignoring the advice of most of his colleagues, the Chinese tyrant sent perhaps a million soldiers to their deaths in his effort to save the loathsome Pyongyang regime. This made it impossible for Beijing to establish relations with Washington, tied it to the Soviet bloc, and lost it Taiwan.

Today China provides the food and energy that keep the same loathsome North Korean regime alive. More critically, and more paradoxically, China has long been Pyongyang's major military ally, and has contributed materially to its nuclear program. Even now, the Chinese seem not to grasp that this program poses a far greater long-term peril to them than it does even to South Korea, not to mention Japan or the United States. Why China would do so much to build up a possible enemy on its own border is again difficult to explain; one can only invoke some sort of feral anti-Western reflex, carried over from the days when, as Mao imagined, the East wind was prevailing over the West wind.

Nor has China yet taken in the urgency of the situation. Rather than using its numerous levers of influence to stop Pyongyang's nuclear programs cold, it is instead pretending to be a bystander, offering to "host" meetings between the North Koreans and Washington. This is hardly likely to lead anywhere helpful. Quite the contrary. North Korea is producing nuclear weapons because it has evidently decided that its security situation requires them; this being the case, it will not be disposed to give them up as part of some grand bargain. And then what? Unless Pyongyang is disarmed, we may expect more Asian countries to go nuclear. South Korea will certainly match the North—only U.S. intervention has prevented it from doing so already; Japan will become a nuclear power; so, possibly, will Taiwan (where the U.S. has also intervened to halt a nuclear-weapons program) and Vietnam. We may still be able to avoid this catastrophic chain of events by preventing North Korea from keeping its nuclear weapons, but only if China takes the lead.

In all these cases, the complicating and deeply unfortunate fact, as Ross Terrill argues convincingly, is that Chinese foreign policy is driven not by external but by internal concerns. What Beijing seeks abroad, ultimately, is *domestic* stability. Toward that end, imaginary dangers and threats to Chinese preeminence are as useful as demonstrated glory and real power. It is no accident that China made its major turn toward stressing external threats, the need for a military buildup, and heightened domestic discipline only in the wake of the Tiananmen massacre of 1989. Its leaders wanted the spear tips pointed outward, as they say, rather than at themselves.

In the short run, this stress on China's need for vigilance against foreign threats has paid off. The generation of young Chinese who began to come of age after 1989 is notably more xenophobic, antidemocratic, and confrontational than its immediate predecessors. But in the medium run, and longer, China's military buildup and belligerent actions are also increasing the possibility of a regime-threatening setback—possibly as the result of a preemptive Chinese attack gone awry.

When the USSR sought to capitalize on American weakness in the post-Vietnam era, the result, in another dozen years, was overextension, domestic crisis, military defeat—and regime change. Will the same sort of process appear in China? And how will we know when it starts?

Most likely the answer to the first question is yes. As foreign dangers loom, the fragile bargain that has kept the domestic scene relatively quiet since the massacre of 1989 is beginning to break down. The bargain between regime and people was essentially, "you let us rule and we will make you rich," and for 25 years China enjoyed a good economic run. But as we have seen, the rosy aggregate figures barely disguise the rot beneath: deflation, banking insolvency, increasing government debt, misallocation of resources, not to mention the lack of a legal system or a legitimate government, pervasive corruption of the rulers, and demoralization of the populace.

Faced with a crisis of analogous proportions, the Russian people submitted themselves to the surgery needed to keep them alive: they abolished Communism, freed the media, established a real parliament and genuine elections, closed money-losing state enterprises, and made the ruble convertible. All this was deeply painful; but the life of the Russian people has improved immeasurably as a result. And so has the life of the globe. The nuclear confrontation, with its tens of thousands of warheads, is over. Russian and American forces, nuclear and conventional, are shrinking. The new

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state of Russia, though smaller than the USSR, has embarked on correct or even warm relations with former satellite countries. Russian culture is stirring once again, and Moscow and St. Petersburg are being restored as gems among Europe's cities.

China has not yet begun to play in the same league. Beijing has carried out *none* of the difficult reforms Moscow managed more than a dozen years ago, even before the Communist system imploded once and for all. How likely can it be, then, that the People's Republic will expire quietly, with little bloodshed and with a reasonably smooth institutional transition? By contrast, how likely is it that its demise will be accompanied instead by a violent death-rattle, in the form of massacres and/or flailing-out abroad? That rival factions will descend into civil war? That the army and the security apparatus will attempt to restore order by means of a coup against the party and by installing a regime of repression at home and xenophobia abroad—that is, Chinese fascism?

Terrill provides a series of differing but well-founded scenarios that deserve close attention, and many more can be created. My own opinion is that change will begin rather quietly, then grow and spread in unpredictable ways. We will not notice it at first, just as we are not noticing its earliest harbingers today. We will learn about it because the Chinese will tell us, albeit only indirectly. They will send a signal that *major* change is afoot when members of both the central and the regional governments of the People's Republic start, in private, to lobby for our support against other members of their own government, instead of presenting something that passes as a united front.

WHAT SHOULD we do then? For 30 years, we have taken our cue from Beijing, and adjusted our movements to suit. The bedrock assumption of our China policy, created in the 1970's but still practiced today, is that the party will always run Beijing and that Beijing will always be in command. Whom then shall we listen to among the conflicting voices? The likelihood is that we simply will not be able to decide, and will therefore respond as flatfootedly as we did when the peoples of the USSR began throwing off the Communist yoke. Foreign businesses will panic at the possible loss of investments; neighboring allies will panic at the prospect of refugees and violence; the State Department will be stumped when it comes to dealing with competing regional authorities, or with Tibetan or Uighur independence. Instinctively we will want to keep in power the devils we know and in whom we have invested so much, rather than take our chances with real change.

The test is coming soon, and the time to prepare grows short.

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Judaism Beyond Words: Conclusion

David Gelernter

JUDAISM IS the story God chooses to tell the Jews, and they choose to hear.

But Judaism is in grave trouble today, because it has difficulty saying what the point of the story is. What *is* Judaism's message to mankind? Jews make it their business to confront man on behalf of God, and (more foolhardy still) God on behalf of man. In practice Judaism is halakha, a "way of going," the religious law. But why should a Jew who knows nothing about Judaism set off down this path? The Jewish nation is the senior nation of the Western world, by rights the spiritual leader; but where does it lead? From the broadest to the timeliest, most concrete terms, Judaism's mission has never been plainer or more pressing or less well understood.

This is the last in a series of essays attempting to explain the essence of Judaism. It may seem bizarre to claim that this "essence of Judaism" has yet to be explained adequately, but Judaism has no portfolio of doctrine to offer, and its scholarly discussions are mostly about halakha and literary interpretation and history, not theology. This is one way in which Judaism is incompatible with Christianity, fundamentally different in character. (The magisterial eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1910, admired for its scrupulous seriousness, has an article on "Christianity" and one on "Jews." None on "Judaism.") In Judaism you live a certain way, unconscious (or barely conscious) of doctrine or theology—because to be conscious of a thing is to be one step removed from it.

Jews are like farmers: they practice an exacting way of life where details matter and transcendent spiritual value lies too deep for outsiders to see. Like farmers, Jews are *attached*—they always know the time and season. They always know when the sun sets, when *Shabbat* starts and when it ends. "But it's hard work; why bother if you don't have to?" Yes, some do get tired and give up. Some never pick up the signal. Many laugh off the whole idea. To be a farmer or an Orthodox Jew, you have to be born to it, or be a serenely incurable romantic, or both.

Jewish doctrine arises implicitly, in the mind of each practicing Jew; in fact, in the back of his mind. Just as deep, broad truths about (say) medicine might arise in someone's mind as a result of practicing medicine—in the form of "living" rather than textbook doctrine—deep truths about Judaism arise as a result of practicing Judaism. Thus, Rabbi Yitzhak Twersky summarizes (in 1996) the view of his father-in-law, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik: "Direct religious experience guarantees absolute certitude. . . . The religious consciousness is not to be subservient to or derivative from any philosophic impetus."

But doctrine "in the back of the mind" is still

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doctrine. And today Judaism must haul its doctrines not merely into full consciousness but out of the ocean of mind altogether, onto paper. In earlier times, troubled Jews demanded, "I want to be Jewish but don't know how; tell me." The Mishnah and the great law codes, including Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, were compiled in response to such questions. Today the body of halakha is secure, but troubled Jews have a different question: no longer "I want to be Jewish but don't know how"; today, "I want to *want* to be Jewish but don't know how."

For many Jews, this is a moment of tense silence, like a child's in the presence of an aged relative to whom he desperately wants to talk but cannot. Many Jews wish to (or long to) embrace Judaism, but cannot bring themselves to do it. They would as soon enter a mosque as a synagogue. They would like to have a seder on Passover, but the ceremony—already threadbare in their parents' generation—comes to pieces in their hands. The intellectual problems seem even greater. Evil strikes them as so palpable, it crowds God out like a suffocating poison cloud. Science is so formidable it seems to crush the life out of religion, leaving Judaism no space to breathe. Thus the parched sinister ramifying silence, like cigarette smoke. . . . Is *this* the final scene?

GOD FORBID. But if Jewish theology is a theology of experience, if Jewish doctrine exists at the back of the mind—in vivo (so to speak), not in vitro, and in the form of discoveries each practicing Jew makes for himself, not abstractions divined by divines—how do we present such doctrine? How to describe (or transcribe) a thought? Different thoughts in different minds take different forms. But we cannot repeat the lazy error of too many psychologists and philosophers and assume that thoughts are routinely made of words.

In previous essays I have laid out four "picture themes" of Judaism like a merchant flourishing rugs in a *souk*. Each is intended to represent (roughly) one of the "doctrinal thoughts" that develop in Jewish minds in response to Jewish life. Each captured thought-image (like a beating butterfly trapped in your cupped hands) represents one doctrine arising from Judaism's theology of experience. My problem has been to transfer these thoughts from mind to paper, like trapping, killing, and mounting a butterfly. (Yes, killing is part of it: the doctrine on paper can never be alive the way doctrine-in-the-mind is alive.) Of course images described in words are not thoughts; but images in general do have certain thought-like properties. You can glance at an image for an instant and still get some impression of what it holds. You can refine and develop an image over time without ruining its compactness. An image can capture movement. You can hold one in mind for years without ever reducing it to words.

Intellectual life has long been half-choked by our refusal to take pictures into our expressive universe. Since Marshall McLuhan, we have called ourselves a visual society; but think of the pejorative way in which we say "image." Thinkers have reputations; politicians have images. In his *Language of Thought* (1975), the philosopher Jerry Fodor does acknowledge what some other philosophers refuse to—that thinking *must* involve images; but even Fodor conceives such images as embedded somehow in a grammatical framework. He seems not to grasp that a thought-passage might consist *purely* of images; consider a painter mulling a picture—inventing, elaborating, simplifying, and superimposing images with no recourse to anything like a grammatical or logical structure.

What do my assertions about pictures (that we often think in pictures, that transcribed pictures are a good representation for a certain type of thought) have to do with Judaism? Nothing, some say. The literary philosopher George Steiner (1997) writes that Judaism "fears the image; it distrusts the metaphor." He is exactly wrong.

I have hinted in earlier pieces at Judaism's visual bias—have mentioned, for example, some of the images that drive the biblical narrative forward (the dove with the olive leaf in its beak, a burning bush, the split-open sea, a flaming torch of a mountain). I have mentioned the luxuriant richness of Judaism's graphic vocabulary: not just menorah, star of David, tablets of the law, and four Hebrew letters of God's proper name but shofar, lion of Judah, lulav and etrog, and so on. (France got its fleur-de-lys from the Crusaders, who took it from the stylized lily that was a popular motif in ancient Israelite Jerusalem.) I have mentioned the finely wrought visual detail in the Bible's descriptions of tabernacle and Temple, and the originality and power of the classical European synagogue interior. Jews even dote on the precise visual characteristics of the alphabet in which Hebrew is written.

Another hint: the best adjective for Jewish literature, from the Bible onward, is "translucent." Old texts are visible through new ones; newer texts quote older texts and add to them. When you look at a classical Midrash or a book of medieval mysticism or a 19th-century Torah commentary, you are

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looking through literary stained glass, which superimposes its own colors and patterns without obscuring what lies beyond.

Such "translucence" is itself just a metaphor—but you can see it embodied in practice. The Vilna edition of the Talmud (1835) became fundamental to yeshiva study. It puts the base text (mishnah or gemara) in a block at the center of each printed page, with the two most important commentaries on either side and other notes and commentaries surrounding those—making a dense, austerely beautiful carpet page. Many separate texts occupy your visual field simultaneously—a practical approximation of textual translucence. Students and scholars recognize and recall particular pages by their appearances. Of course this style of layout has been used elsewhere, too—but nowhere else has it become so fundamental to study.

Judaism "fears the image"? Maybe Steiner fears it. The Jewish mind is quintessentially visual. It might just be *because* the Jewish mind is so inherently, exuberantly visual that graven images of the Lord are so forcefully prohibited.

Returning now to my four "picture themes," which of course I can only describe in words—I stress that they are not Judaism's *only* themes. But arguably they are the most important.

HERE THEY are, in outline.

(1) Separation—as in the splitting open of the Red Sea. The unifying theme of halakha is the creation of separations, and thus of holiness.

(2) The veil that separates God and man—like a bridal veil, or the curtain that hangs before the holy ark in synagogue. The veil itself is important because it is God-given, but ultimate importance attaches not to the veil but to what lies beyond it.

(3) The act or motion of turning inward, going inside, entering. God has withdrawn out of history into the human mind; for Judaism the "religious stance" is not believing but *listening*—to the "still small voice" inside you.

(4) The force field between male and female, which lets human beings imitate God and finish creation. From a husband and wife joined in love you get not merely the beast with two backs, a male plus a female, but something wholly different and otherwise impossible: a man.

Each of these four picture-themes implies a doctrine.

First, the doctrine of man's transcendence. Man is not part of nature; man is defined over and against nature. He must struggle out of nature and away from nature, toward God; must struggle out of nature like a baby struggling to be born. And this struggle is the meaning of holiness.

Jews defy nature by defying its most fundamental impulse—the mad onrush of chaos, reducing all things to one level, abolishing all divisions. In my theme-image, the forced-apart waters of Creation become the upright water-walls at the split-open Red Sea, which become (eventually) the upright standards of the rolled-open Torah in synagogue, and the forced opening of birth itself. Separation is life, holiness, halakha.

Halakha seems (to the outsider) complex and arbitrary. But it has a unifying theme, which applies to kashrut and family purity, Sabbath and festivals, kiddush and havdalah, planting land, weaving cloth, making marriages. The theme is *separating*, in space and time.

Jews convert the mere physical act of separation into a moral proclamation. By relentlessly making separations they say: we do not surrender; we choose freedom. A Jew must do things *in public* that mark him out and separate him off as a Jew. That is his most basic religious obligation. To eat only kosher food is mandatory, and central to Judaism; for a man to wear a yarmulke is much less important. Yet to eat kosher food inside an Orthodox community is less praiseworthy than to walk through Paris in a yarmulke.

Second, the doctrine of God's transcendence. What the world calls "Judaism" is only a reflection in a window. You cannot see through the window, because the far side is black (or at any rate, invisible). But you must grasp that it *is* a window, there *is* a far side—and the far side is God. God is transcendent: cannot be seen, described, imagined. All you can imagine is the windowpane. All you can know is that it *is* a windowpane.

Yet the God of Judaism is no cold, remote abstraction—because of the windowpane, the "veil" itself, which might be the most remarkable religious device ever conceived. Jews believe in a transcendent God Who does not part the veil and become human but does invite (indeed, implore) man to approach.

The veil proclaims that God's ineffable, transcendent presence can be closer to you if it is separated from you. You cannot see or know God but you can see, know, and approach the veil, knowing that God is on the other side. The veil symbolizes God's inconceivableness and (simultaneously, paradoxically) draws God and man close.

In my theme-picture, the veil is the tallis worn at prayer, the mask Moses wears after encountering God; the two curtains of the Holy of Holies, the

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curtains before the holy ark in any synagogue; the opaque tefillin boxes or the mezuzah hiding biblical texts; the ark of the covenant, screened by cherubs' wings, hiding the tablets of Sinai. The veil is present in the wordless, tuneless sound of the shofar, the overpowering blank of the Western Wall, a Jew's refusal to pronounce God's name.

THIRD, THE doctrine of inner listening and, by association, the religious legitimacy of doubt. If you look for God in history, you will not find Him. The problem of evil is man's problem; the central question is not why God hasn't saved the world but why *you* haven't. Jews are expected to accept God not like children who look to their parents for miracles but like adults who pull their share, who freely accept *ol malkhut shamayim*, the yoke of heaven's kingdom. To find God, Jews try to make out the "still small voice" that the prophet Elijah heard: the echo of God's voice, an *inner* voice.

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., after Bar Kokhba's revolt against Rome some six decades later, the Jews were driven out of their Judean homeland and a remarkable thing happened—something unprecedented in human history. Jews never wanted to, never planned to—but (in effect) they left home and grew up.

Israel's spiritual and material support was gone. In the black sobbing ruins, Jews looked around and discovered they were on their own. Had God abandoned them? No, God had not. God had moved inside. Henceforth, He was embodied in Israel itself. He was no longer the maker of fires, storms, and earthquakes; henceforth He was a still, small voice. Israel had depended on God, and always would. But from now on God must depend on Israel, too. Having been created, reared, and protected by God, Israel would now show what it had learned and what it was worth. God became the Jews' responsibility.

For many people the problem of "theodicy" (Leibniz's term), of God's justice, is the hardest and most important problem of theology. How could a just God countenance this evil world? But for Jews there is no such theological problem, because God does *not* countenance this evil world; man does. Judaism tells us an obvious yet startling fact: "*lo ba'shamayim hi*," the Torah is not in heaven; it is on earth, is mankind's to interpret and apply and enforce. Yet another startling fact from the Talmud: "From the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One Blessed be He has nothing in His universe but the four *amot* of halakha alone," where "four *amot*" is the space occupied by one human being. God has nothing in His universe but the mind of the Jew.

Nothing is harder than listening to yourself, to your own mind. Your mind says too many things you do not want to hear. Nothing is easier than to be vaguely aware of what your mind wants to say but to drown it out, sweep it away, ignore it. Conscience (the devil once said) is a Jewish invention (and he was right). But doubt is part of Judaism, too. The Bible and Talmud are records of the Jews doubting God and God doubting the Jews and the Jews doubting themselves and (in one famous passage in the talmudic tractate *Menahot*) God doubting Himself.

But doubt functions differently in Judaism than in any other of the great religions Judaism fathered. It is inside, not outside. For a Jew, the path is clear (not simple, but clear): doubt, but act.

Fourth: the doctrine of man's twoness, and (by association) of inductive morality.

God is one but man is two: not male *or* female but male *and* female. Husband and wife create a whole man out of two halves. Their sexual union is inherently blessed whether a child is engendered or not. The cult of the couple has given marriage in Judaism a supreme (and unique) importance.

In Judaism, male and female are perfectly asymmetric. The force field between maleness and femaleness creates marriage and colors the whole universe. To attempt to make the two sexes interchangeable, to short out the battery that operates civilization, to wire its two poles together, is an act of nihilist hatred directed against beauty, humanity, and God.

The purpose of life is to marry and rear a family. The modern world's idea that career and not family is the point of life is un-Jewish—and for Jews it is therefore wrong. (Not a choice one disagrees with; wrong.) Because man cannot exist except where male and female are one, the Jewish "self" is a strange, unfamiliar self, made of two separate beings. And a self that includes another person is a hint or foretaste of a self that includes God.

Jewish morality starts with the ground case and works outward. You approach the goal step by step. It is no accident that the verse in Leviticus does not merely say, "love your neighbor"; it says, "love your neighbor *as yourself*." You know how to begin; now, move forward. The ground case (loving yourself) is your basis for the inductive step (loving your neighbor).

Philologists and Bible critics once thought they were scoring points against Judaism by arguing that the biblical word "neighbor" refers not to "fellow

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man" but to a member of your own group or tribe. But this is a glory of Judaism, not a limitation. Judaism gives you a *method* for approaching goodness. (Many have noticed that those who are filled with love for mankind tend to be the least loving of people in practice.) From Leviticus it follows directly that, in Judaism, self-love is required; otherwise you are failing in a religious duty.

HERE, THEN, are my four themes. They show the Jewish nation coming to terms with nature, history, man, and God. Their underlying colors are defiance and celebration—a color-harmony that is unique to Judaism. Jews celebrate nature, but defy it; will not be part of it. They celebrate history, but defy the seemingly crushing problem of theodicy, of God's justice in an evil world. They celebrate sexuality, but defy it to turn them into animals; they put the married couple at the center of the universe. They celebrate God (ineffable and transcendent), but defy God's unknowable transcendence to scare them into silence, or keep them at a distance. Their duty as Jews is to go forth like Abraham and embody God on earth.

Thus, four mounted butterflies—not as brilliant as live ones, but inducements to set off down the trail and discover the live ones for yourself.

But how do we know there *is* a God? It is strange and wonderful that such a hard question should seem in the end to have such a simple, universally agreed answer—"universally" meaning implicitly.

Although we have been living for generations in the age of atheism (or so it has seemed), this atheism turns out to have been phony—professed uncritically and without thinking, the way medieval peasants professed Christianity. The idea that our ethical principles are merely *reasonable* has been raised and batted down so many times that today it can safely be called dead as a doornail. These principles are not "only reasonable," they are not *per se* useful, they are certainly not obvious—and they are no mere preferences or whims. Saying "I prefer that no one be tortured to death" is not like saying "I prefer orange juice for breakfast." It reflects a moral absolute, independent of anyone's opinion or whim or preference. Virtually no serious person denies this.

But to insist that such principles are "absolute" or (in other words) "transcendent" or (in other words) "sacred" is just another way of saying, "I believe in God." And not just any god; in the God of these principles, which is to say the God of Israel. Some intellectuals will go to any lengths to deny it, but there has been no way around this truth at least since the day Nietzsche (in his blazing intellectual integrity) parked the pickup truck of his moral philosophy square in the middle of the intellectual Autobahn. By acknowledging that to reject God, as he did, *forced* him to reject "Judeo-Christian morality," as he also did, he gave the game away. God and transcendent morality are inseparable.

Modernism (on the other hand) is the idea that you can close your bank account and keep writing checks. Modernism is a lie. Without God in the bank, your moral checks are drawn against nothing. A modernist who denies God while insisting on the absoluteness of Jewish ethics—which, of course, he will call something else—has proclaimed *himself* god.

Nietzsche prophesied that one day a "madman" would announce the death of God, that mankind had killed Him. (He was parodying, unawares, a central doctrine of Christianity.) Today some of our foremost thought-leaders are no longer out to kill God (they think they have put paid to that job); now they seek the death of man. It is a three-step process. Modern science thinks to have abolished "man's uniqueness." Now we are trying (in dead earnest) to abolish the distinction between male and female. Soon, genetic engineers will offer parents the chance to custom-tailor their babies. Jews have a unique duty to put everything they have into saying no to this project. Judaism *requires* that they say no.

NIETZSCHE USED the phrase "Judeo-Christian morality," and was neither the first nor the last to do so. Many casual observers believe that the underlying ethics of Judaism and Christianity are basically the same, that the differences between the two religions center on religious law and on Jesus. Wrong. I have already pointed out, in part IV, their sharp disagreements on sexuality, marriage, and family. Their dispute about the character of morality is just as basic.

The argument between Judaism's morality of action and early Christianity's morality of passion, of suffering, is no mere academic disagreement. It is a schism running right down the center of Western civilization. In the action morality of Judaism, you *must judge* your fellow man—it is a moral obligation. Refusing to judge (being "nonjudgmental," in the ugly cliché) is callous, cowardly, and wrong—although, the great Pharisee Hillel warns, "Do not judge your fellow man until you have been in his place." Understood: a man might judge mistakenly; if so, he will have to face the consequences. Such are the responsibilities of adulthood.

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Why does Judaism insist that to judge is mandatory? One part (only one) has to do with mental health. Nietzsche explains: "When a noble man feels resentment, it is absorbed in his instantaneous reaction and therefore does not poison him." Unexpressed resentment (in other words) can turn to poison in the metabolism of mind. The Bible anticipates this sharp observation by *outlawing* Nietzschean resentment: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt rebuke yes *rebuke* thy neighbor" (Leviticus 19:17).

And you must also defend yourself: your "self" naturally including your family and your extended family, possibly your whole nation and, ever since the careers of Israel's prophets, spreading uncertainly outward toward the whole of mankind. Of course Judaism believes what Isaiah taught, that in the end of days nation will not lift up sword against nation. But in the meantime, ever-increasing moral maturity means more and not less fighting, more and not fewer wars. In Judaism, pacifism is immoral; it is the unindicted co-conspirator of wickedness.

Not so in Christianity. To the critic and philosopher Michael Tanner (1994), "Resist not evil" is one of Jesus' "most impressive precepts," and one that is (naturally) "in sharp conflict with the law"—meaning Jewish law. Why does Judaism nonetheless reaffirm the law and reject this most impressive precept? Because the Bible says: "Choose life and live, you and your children!" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Early Christianity was associated, as Tanner notes, with a different morality—I've called it a morality of passion, born of suffering; it insists that you must not judge your fellow man and must *not* defend yourself, however you define "self." There is support for this passive morality in the New Testament. Respecting judgment: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (John 8:7). "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself" (Romans 2:1). Regarding pacifism: "Whoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). And of course, "Resist not evil" (Matthew 5:39).

Jewish thinking is not just different, it is opposite. Christianity: "Whoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Judaism: "If I am not for myself, who *will* be?" (Hillel's famous statement in Mishnah Avot). Jewish morality is warrior morality: it is no accident that Abraham, Moses, and David, the Bible's greatest heroes, should all have been described as warriors.

But this hardly puts Judaism on the side of Nietzsche's cruel "patrician ethics"; Judaism is equidistant from Christianity and Nietzsche. Hillel did not say, "If I am not for myself, who *will* be?", and stop there. He continued: "If I am only for myself, what am I?" Jews do not pray (quoting the Psalm), "May the Lord give strength to His people," and stop there. They continue: "May the Lord bless His people with peace."

ALL FOUR of my themes inhabit one summary image. Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai was a hero of the Talmud and a bitter enemy of Rome. When he spoke against Roman hegemony in Israel, spies overheard and reported him, and Roman soldiers sought his life. He took refuge in a cave with his son; they were forced to remain in hiding for twelve years.

The Zohar is the basic text of Jewish mysticism. It was composed in Spain by Moses de Leon in the last three decades of the 13th century. But the Zohar puts many of its thoughts in the mouth of Rabbi Shimon, and is written as if *he* wrote it. By the time modern scholarship established its real origin, the idea was firmly established that the Zohar was Rabbi Shimon's work, composed in the dark of his cave.

This legendary cave with Rabbi Shimon inside composing the Zohar is Judaism's perfect emblem. It brings my themes together; it is the nutshell with infinity inside: "I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space," says Hamlet, "were it not that I have bad dreams." But Judaism's dreams are not bad. They are dreams of salvation.

Yet something is not quite right on the world's balance sheets. Something doesn't quite compute. The cold war pitted the democratic West—part Christian, part post-Christian modernist—against the Marxist East. The one thing Christianity and Marxism had in common was that they were both Jewish inventions. In significant part, "secular modernism" was a Jewish invention, too. Today's post-cold-war conflict pits the West—part Christian, part secular postmodern—against radical Islam. Judaism is again deeply implicated, in the creation both of Islam and of postmodernism.

Not that I want to assign credit to Judaism for all these developments. That would be a slur, not a compliment. Obviously, Jews and Jewish ideas are only partly responsible, are only the launch-pads for these mammoth intellectual rocket-ships—and, like all launch-pads, have been scorched and blasted at liftoff. Nonetheless: if we were forced to

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choose just one, there would be no way to deny that Judaism is the most important intellectual development in human history. And we *are* forced to, because the world's leading scholars, Gentile and Jew (especially Jew), presume to write the history of civilization without knowing anything at all about Judaism.

Which is yet not wholly surprising because, after all, the first two of my themes have to do with separation and the other two with inwardness. Cave walls symbolize the Jew's separation from society at large and (in a different sense) from transcendent God. Yet the Jews, shut up and shut out as (traditionally) they were, have always had infinity in view: a microcosmic infinity. The infinity of daring voyages venturing inward rather than outward, deeper and deeper.

THE CAVE is symbolized itself by the oldest surviving European synagogue, the Altneuschul in Prague. It dates roughly from 1280, though parts of the building are older. The insides of medieval churches are centrifugal, drawing the eye outward toward windows and wall decorations; dead center, beneath the crossing, is often empty. Synagogues are centripetal, directing the eye inward toward the bimah at the center, where the Torah is read in the midst of the congregation. The Altneuschul seems strikingly cave-like inside, narrow and tall and full of soft dusty light coming through small windows set too high to see out of. Its grave beauty and whispery grandeur and the lights in its eyes are all striking; the inside is densely decorated with metal grillwork around the bimah, hanging lamps, carved wood, the golden-red banner presented by Charles IV in 1358, an elaborate menorah, the ark. A perfect image of Rabbi Shimon's cave: an inner infinity, separate from the world, where the mind travels inward toward God without stopping.

One of the old seats along the rim of the small room is marked as the Maharal's place—the seat of Rabbi Yehuda Bezalel Loewe, a chief rabbi of Prague, celebrated 16th-century scholar of astronomy and philosophy and Torah. Just as the Zohar appropriated Rabbi Shimon as its honorary author, a folktale about the mysterious Golem appropriated Rabbi Loewe. The Golem was a huge, man-shaped creature of coarse clay, a latent automaton sculpted by the rabbi to protect the Jews of Prague from persecution. It came to life when he slipped into its mouth a paper inscribed with the four Hebrew letters of God's name. Otherwise, it only *looked* like a man.

Why has the folktale always seemed so inevitable and so right to Jews? Because they know (at least subliminally) that *they* are the slip of paper bearing God's proper name; that Jews were created for no other purpose than to make the coarse clay of humanity come spiritually alive, to make it man. And the trick works—or has so far. But we had better be careful. Should the Name ever be allowed to disappear, mankind's spiritual life will be over.

Author's Note

"Judaism Beyond Words" is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Rabbi T.N. Lewis zt"l. Isaiah 59:21: "Here is My covenant with you, says the Lord; My spirit that is upon you, and the words I have put in your mouth, will not depart from your mouth or the mouths of your children or the mouths of your children's children—the Lord says—from now though all eternity."

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The Morality of War

George Weigel

AMID THE welter of moral argument—some serious, much not—that preceded Operation Iraqi Freedom, two clarifying moments stand out.

The first came on January 26, when Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed a generally hostile audience of the global great and good in Davos, Switzerland. After having made the case for a possible armed intervention in Iraq, Powell was asked by George Carey, the recently retired Archbishop of Canterbury, whether the Bush administration was not overselling the capacity of "hard power" to change what needed changing in the world, and underrating the utility of "soft power." The terms are the trope of the Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye; soft power, in Carey's less than luminous formulation, has "something to do with human values."

Powell, an Episcopalian and long the most reluctant of the administration's senior officials to use hard power in Iraq, had had enough. "There is nothing in American experience or in American political life or in our culture that suggests that we *want* to use hard power," he replied, and went on:

> But what we have found over the decades is that unless you do have hard power—and here I think you're referring to military power—then sometimes you are faced with situations that you can't deal with. . . . It was not soft power that freed Europe [in the 1940's]. It was hard power. And what followed immediately after hard power? Did the United States ask for dominion over a single nation in Europe? No. Soft power came in with the Marshall Plan. Soft power came with American GI's who put their weapons down once the war was over and helped those nations rebuild. We did the same thing in Japan.

Five and a half weeks later, on March 5, Cardinal Pio Laghi—former Vatican ambassador in Washington, personal friend of former President George H.W. Bush, and now Pope John Paul II's special envoy—met in the Oval Office with President George W. Bush. The President reviewed the administration's case against Saddam Hussein and the reasons leading inexorably to the conclusion that Iraq could be disarmed only by the use of military force. In response, Cardinal Laghi urged that there must be "another way." To which the President replied, crisply, that all the "other ways" had been tried and had not worked; anyone serious about the disarmament of Iraq had to recognize that.

Strip away the barnacles attached to the massive peace demonstrations that roiled the West's major cities in February and March—anti-globalization, anti-Israel, anti-"racism," anti-McDonald's, anti-

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America, anti-whatever—and you will find the same conviction: there had to be another way than military force. Yes, those demonstrations were organized and paid for by the usual suspects on the international Left. Yes, the organizers of the largest political demonstration in British history cared far less about the Iraqi people than about bashing a born-again Texas cowboy and a Labor-party traitor—a point brought home by Jesse Jackson when he denied Iraqi exiles a chance to speak at that demonstration on the grounds that the subject was not Iraq but George Bush and Tony Blair. Yes, those demonstrations fouled the very idea of "peace" by identifying it with a morally odious option: leaving in place an aggressive fascist regime to go on torturing its citizens and threatening its neighbors. Yes, the effect of the demonstrations was to strengthen the hand of unscrupulous and cynical politicians like Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder.

All of that is true. But something else was also afoot in the pre-war debate, particularly among those who came to the argument equipped with strong moral convictions. That something was the resolute refusal to acknowledge that, in the world as it is and as it will remain, soft power must be buttressed by hard power in the pursuit of peace.

The refusal itself is not a new phenomenon; once upon a time, and not so long ago at that, it could be attributed to political naiveté, to a misreading of the Sermon on the Mount, to utopianism, or to some combination thereof. Today, however, it bears a new face, and has marshaled new evidence to advance its claims. Appealing to the manifest accomplishments of the late-20th-century human-rights movement, advocates of soft power adduce such successes as the largely nonviolent revolution of 1989 in Eastern and Central Europe; the Filipino "people power" revolution of 1985-86; and the democratic transformations in East Asia and Latin America. What these examples suggest is that, in some circumstances, there may indeed be another way. What a fair number of people have concluded from them is that, especially where the exercise of American power looms as the alternative, there must *always* be another way.

The latter idea is hardly confined to the fever swamps of Western political life: Hollywood, the Socialist Workers' party, the liberal-arts professoriate. The same claim for soft power and "another way" underlies the mental outlook of the present UN system. Soft power as the sovereign remedy for the world's ills is likewise a point of dogma within a considerable swath of the Democratic party, especially its activist wing, and it is what animated the foreign policy of the Clinton administration. Tony Blair's difficulties within his own party (and with every major "quality" newspaper in Britain except the *Telegraph*) show how powerful a grip this idea has on the British imagination. Even in Poland, perhaps the most pro-American country in the world and a nation with deeply entrenched memories of tyranny, polls found that only 20 to 25 percent of the people supported Operation Iraqi Freedom in the days just before it was launched.

And then there are the worlds within worlds of organized religion. To judge by the statements of some of its officials and by virtually every bishops' conference in the world, the senior leadership of the Catholic Church is deeply reluctant to acknowledge the legitimate role of hard power under some circumstances; were this reluctance to become further institutionalized, the impact of a functionally pacifist Church on the world politics of the 21st century could be considerable. As for liberal Protestantism, it went down the road of such functional pacifism a long time ago, as did the left wing of American evangelicalism. Eastern Orthodox leaders were likewise almost uniformly in the soft-power camp in the run-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom. In an international environment that is increasingly shaped by religious convictions and commitments, the idea of soft power and "another way" is most certainly an idea with consequences.

Perhaps the most ambitious effort, post 9/11, to argue for the necessity of a comprehensive soft-power approach to international conflict is Jonathan Schell's *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People*.* Schell is the author of *The Fate of the Earth* (1982), a work widely celebrated during the "nuclear freeze" period of the first Reagan administration for its chilling portrait of a planet inherited by cockroaches after humankind had done itself to death because of the follies, and ultimately the breakdown, of nuclear deterrence. *The Fate of the Earth* was followed by a lesser effort, *The Abolition* (1986), which laid out Schell's program for complete nuclear disarmament.

In those days, Schell insisted that the fact of nuclear weapons, not the fact of Communist regimes, was the grave and imminent threat to peace and indeed to human survival. Unhappily for Schell, his theory was massively falsified by the revolution of 1989. Once Communist regimes collapsed, disarmament proceeded apace, and the threat of nuclear

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war between the former Soviet Union and the West virtually disappeared. Similarly, nuclear disarmament has since taken place in several states (including South Africa, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan), albeit not according to the prescriptions of *The Abolition*; meanwhile, North Korea has gone nuclear, Iraq and Iran have made strenuous efforts to do so, and a new nuclear standoff exists in South Asia between India and Pakistan.

But Schell has been undeterred, so to speak. With *The Unconquerable World*, he is back for yet another second chance: in this instance, the chance to put a historical and intellectual foundation under the claim that there must always be another way to do what needs to be done in world politics.

The Unconquerable World does get some things right. Europe's settling down to four years of internecine slaughter in August 1914 was indeed one of history's great divides. By contrast, the nonviolent revolution of 1989 was a powerful demonstration that "the moral equivalent of war" (to use William James's phrase) could change things for the better. Just as Schell writes, moreover, consent is the essence of political stability, and when consent is withdrawn, even the most solid-seeming regimes can crumble. The human-rights movement is indeed a powerful factor in contemporary world politics, and its successes do demonstrate that hard power is not the only form of power. Finally, the expanding world of the democracies is an expanding world of peace, one in which the problem of war has been largely solved.

But Schell misreads the meaning of every one of these truths. Like Barbara Tuchman in *The Guns of August*, he blames World War I on "the structure of the war system itself." Not only has this thesis been thoroughly demolished—the principal cause, the sine qua non, of World War I was an aggressive imperial Germany*—but Schell's obsessive adherence to it leads him to miss the deeper significance of World War I. In fact, that conflict marked the beginning of a profound civilizational crisis in the "Old Europe," a crisis whose still-reverberating effects are today manifest in unprecedentedly low birth rates and the kind of pusillanimity displayed by France, Belgium, and Germany in the months before Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As for "1989," Schell insists that these striking events were utterly unanticipated in the West, so deeply sunk was it in the "war system itself." This ignores the fact that both President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II intuited in the early 1980's that the Communist emperor had far fewer clothes than previously suspected, and proceeded to deploy both hard *and* soft power to accelerate the Communist crack-up. Schell also refuses to acknowledge that Solidarity in Poland, Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, and the other organized components of the human-rights resistance were able to do what they did because Reagan's military rearmament program put extraordinary, and ultimately unbearable, economic pressure on the Soviet Union, and because the West's insistence on deploying Pershing II and cruise missiles, in the face of massive opposition by the "peace" movements of the day, called the bluff on Soviet nuclear blackmail, demoralized the Soviet leadership, and created the strategic environment in which nonviolent resistance could work. In that connection, Schell is also curiously silent about the many ways in which American soft power—Radio Free Europe, financial and logistical support for Solidarity, diplomacy at the UN Human Rights Commission, the work of the National Endowment for Democracy—supported the local human-rights movements. But then, acknowledging this would have been tantamount to acknowledging that soft and hard power can work together, which would rather spoil Schell's storyline.

SCHELL IS rightly taken with the analyses of totalitarian power and the prescriptions for nonviolent resistance written in the 1970's and 1980's by men like Czechoslovakia's Václav Havel, Poland's Adam Michnik, and Hungary's Gyorgy Konrád. But his interest in their thought does not extend to their critique of the Western peace movement (of which Schell was an avatar) for its insouciance about Communist totalitarianism. Nor does he acknowledge the deep truth in one of Havel's most important essays, "Anatomy of a Reticence"—namely, that Western anti-nuclear activists in the 1980's had little use for the human-rights activists of Eastern and Central Europe, thinking them dangerous destabilizers unconcerned about "the fate of the earth." But then, wrestling with all this would once again require him to acknowledge the ways in which soft and hard power can work together, and once again Schell is not prepared to do that.

As Schell notes, "cooperative" power has expanded its sway in the world over the past century, and the democratic world, which embodies such cooperative power within and among states, constitutes a remarkable zone of peace. Yet there is no

* See, for instance, the masterful essay by Patrick Glynn and the late Paul Seabury, "The Sarajevo Fallacy," in the *National Interest* (Fall 1987).

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reckoning in *The Unconquerable World* with the present dangers to this zone of peace. Islamism is a minor blip on Schell's threat-acquisition radar, and China's potential for mischief of various sorts goes simply unremarked. Nor does he confront the problem illustrated in recent months by the behavior of moral popinjays like the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, and ex-radicals like Germany's Green foreign minister, Joschka Fischer: namely, that cooperative power unmoored from sound moral convictions can lead to very unsavory politics. As we were reminded by the spectacle of a France more eager to protect its Iraqi economic interests than to confront repression and aggression, and joining with Germany to threaten Turkey with exclusion from Europe were it to cooperate with the U.S. military, there are corrupt and dangerous forms of soft power, too.

Incapable of understanding the lesson contained in his own instances of the successful application of soft power, Schell is also tone-deaf to the crucial role of culture in contemporary international politics. Over the last 400 years, he suggests, the "war system" has been Europe's principal contribution to history, thus ignoring law, science, and the arts. The "logic" of this "war system," he writes, means that wars always "run to extremes," thus ignoring such contrary evidence as America's 20th-century military interventions in Central America and the Caribbean, the Korean war, or, more recently, the Six-Day war, the first Gulf war, and Afghanistan. Imperialism, he sums up, is nothing but "a mature, well-developed structure of violence," ignoring the fact that the British empire, for all its faults, brought the soft power of the rule of law to places where it had never been before (South Asia) and has not been since (the Middle East, with the exception of Israel). And so forth.

Finally, in this lengthy book on contemporary problems of international security, there is no mention of the Khobar Towers bombing, the terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies in East Africa, and al Qaeda's attack on the *U.S.S. Cole*. Others may remember, however, that each of these incidents took place on the watch of an American administration deeply committed to soft power. What *this* suggests is that a world in which the accomplishments of soft power are not protected by the availability of hard power, and by the willingness to use it in defense of those accomplishments, is not an "unconquerable" world at all. It is a profoundly vulnerable world.

Indeed, some threats to peace, to freedom, and to the minimum conditions of world order can *only* be met by hard power. Moreover, while cooperative power is certainly a civilizational accomplishment of the first importance, there are instances in which it cannot be deployed because the adversary will read it as weakness and intensify his aggression. If Israel had chosen "another way" in 1948, the Jews would have been driven into the sea in a mass slaughter. On the other hand, if the Palestinian Arabs had chosen "another way" after the Six-Day war of 1967, they would now be making preparations to celebrate the 35th anniversary of their state. But complexities like these are not to be imagined in the world according to Jonathan Schell.

Where they are indeed imagined, and deeply pondered, is in the body of thought known as the just-war tradition. Contrary to many contemporary confusions—frequently propagated, alas, by churchmen—the just-war tradition is not simply a method of casuistry: a series of hurdles, primarily having to do with the protection of noncombatants, that religious leaders and moral philosophers set for public officials. Rather, it is a theory of statecraft, a method for determining when and how hard power can contribute to securing the political goods of freedom, justice, and peace (understood as order). The just-war tradition, in other words, is about linking good ends to the means capable of achieving those ends. For to will good ends without willing the means to them is frivolity, a form of moral childishness.

In her new book, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*,* Jean Bethke Elshtain lays out the case for moral adulthood in contemporary international politics. She opens her book with a chilling injunction from Osama bin Laden, in which the al Qaeda chieftain calls on "every Muslim who believes in Allah and wishes to be rewarded to comply with Allah's order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it."

Anyone, Elshtain suggests, who refuses to reckon with the reality of this bloody-minded charge, or with the threat it poses to the accomplishments of soft power in the United States and throughout the West, belongs in the company of the humane fools in Camus's novel, *The Plague*, who refuse to believe that there are rats in the city and thereby make the plague worse. Since today's plague-bearers are all too real, we "have no choice but to fight—not in order to conquer any countries or to destroy peoples or religions, but to defend who we are and what we, at our best, represent." In the circum-

* Basic Books, 229 pp., $23.00.

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stances faced by the United States, the use of hard power is not simply one option among many; it is a moral duty.

Just War Against Terror takes a classically Augustinian approach to the body of thought out of which it grows. Governments, Ehlstain writes, exist to ensure "civic peace" (Augustine's famous "tranquility of order," *tranquillitas ordinis*). This civic peace is "not the kingdom promised by Scripture that awaits the end-time" but, rather, a humbler thing: a "basic framework of settled law and simple, everyday order." This—the very conditions for the possibility of civil peace—is what terrorists and rogue states seek to destroy or disrupt, and that is why the first moral duty of governments in the face of such a threat is to stop it. Although it seems an elementary point, it is one that the advocates of soft power seem to have had no end of trouble grasping.

The next step in the just-war tradition is to recognize the moral distinctiveness of war. As Elshtain notes, principled pacifists, functional pacifists (like Jonathan Schell), and hardened realists all agree that war exists in a realm beyond moral reasoning and argument. But the just-war tradition takes a different tack, rigorously distinguishing between, on the one hand, the violence of brigandage, piracy, or modern terrorism and, on the other hand, the proportionate and discriminate use of armed force by legitimate public authorities for morally defensible ends. In other words, war *is* a moral category, and peace, in Elshtain's formulation, "may sometimes be served by the just use of force, even as power is most certainly involved."

The just-war tradition does not, then, begin with a "presumption against war" or a "presumption against violence," as so many religious leaders and intellectuals since 9/11 and particularly during the debate before Operation Iraqi Freedom have claimed. Rather, it begins with the question of ends. Only after having established the ends that public authority is obliged to seek and to defend does it take up the question of means.

This latter question is of course never easy—especially when it comes to an asymmetrical conflict like the one between a state (the United States) and terrorist organizations that function like states but do not have the "location" of a state in the international system (al Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas). Still, Elshtain observes, morally serious adults "have to discern where self-defense begins and ends, where just punishment begins and ends, how to distinguish each of these from revenge and vengeance, how to build in limits against foes who preach and practice violence and killing without limits, and so on." By recognizing that war is a human activity that, like every other human activity, falls within the scrutiny of moral reason, the just-war tradition offers a very different picture of our situation from the one on offer in Jonathan Schell's image of a "war system" with an innate and irresistible tendency toward "extremes."

In the event, Operation Iraqi Freedom would pose a test of these two ideas, and would convincingly demonstrate which is the more accurate. As we saw in that conflict, contemporary weapons technologies make it far *less* likely that war waged by a responsible combatant like the United States will inevitably escalate into mass slaughter, and far *more* likely that it will take account of the principles of proportionality (no more force than necessary) and discrimination (no direct targeting of noncombatants) demanded by the just-war tradition. Global satellite positioning systems, precision-guided munitions, and stealth technologies are all costly. But far from being indicators of American imperial ambitions or strategic recklessness, let alone Schell's "logic" of "extremes," the use of these remarkable weapons, which in Iraq destroyed a totalitarian regime without destroying the country it had held in thrall, indicates American moral and political seriousness.

BECAUSE *Just War Against Terror* was completed before the Iraq debate got going in earnest in late 2002, Elshtain does not address the question of why so many American religious leaders and others made such a hash of the just-war tradition during that debate. Is it because they accept the notion that the tradition begins with a "presumption against violence"? If so, how has that historically false and philosophically dubious idea gained such widespread acceptance, contributing to the insistence among so many that there must always be another way? More momentously, what does it mean for public argument that the just-war tradition would seem to be more carefully appreciated, and far better understood, in our military academies than in our seminaries and divinity schools, our universities and philanthropic foundations?

Such questions are all the more relevant in the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Even prior to that action, advocates of the universal applicability of soft power were suggesting that the use of armed force at the dawn of the 21st century threatened to vitiate an entire century's laborious efforts to erect a world order in which law, diplomacy, and politics would become the normal means of resolving conflict. No sooner had this idea been repudi-

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ated on the battlefield than it was immediately resurrected in the wake of Iraq's liberation, when many of those who had been opposed to the war in the first place now argued that only the UN had the moral authority to oversee the reconstruction of Iraq's political, economic, and cultural systems.

Set aside the curious notion that the self-consciously amoral, realpolitik calculations of France, Russia, and China (to name three veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council) constitute a superior moral authority. The fact remains that legal, political, and diplomatic means of resolving conflict, morally and politically desirable as they may be, are not always adaptable to threats that cannot be ignored: German and Japanese ambitions in the 1930's, genocidal ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, an Iraqi regime bent on developing nuclear weapons. A millennium and a half of Western reflection suggests, furthermore, that armed force can and does contribute to the rule of law in international affairs by demonstrating that lawbreakers will pay for their aggression and will not be permitted to destroy the minimum conditions of order in politics among nations.

How could it be otherwise? Imagine a world that had "evolved" to the point where there really were effective legal and political institutions and instruments for resolving conflicts among nations. Even in that world, the rule of law would not be self-vindicating. Human nature being what it is, someone would inevitably break the rules, and would do so at times and in ways that could not be handled by diplomacy. Even in such a world, then, the sanction of proportionate and discriminate armed force would have to remain available, precisely to vindicate the rule of law. "Hard power" and "soft power" are two dimensions of the morally serious exercise of power.

The war that began on 9/11 is, in many respects, a war against deeply entrenched fantasies. The notion that soft power and hard power are antinomies is one such fantasy, on a par with the claim that the Security Council as presently constituted is an inherently superior moral authority. What Americans learned on 9/11 is that the world is too dangerous to allow these fantasies further sway. It is past time for all those who wish to think about world politics in moral categories to learn that same lesson.

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Hizballahland

Gal Luft

When Israel pulled out of its security zone in southern Lebanon three years ago, it was widely predicted that the radical Shiite group Hizballah, whose forces had relentlessly attacked the occupying Israeli troops, would close up military operations and henceforth focus solely on Lebanese domestic affairs. In the event, the exact opposite occurred: promptly declaring that its next objective was the liberation of the entire land of Palestine and the destruction of the "Zionist entity," Hizballah seized control of the 350-square-mile area that had been occupied by Israel, turning it into a de-facto state within a state. In Hizballahland, as the area might now be called, the group has managed to amass an impressive stockpile of weapons, including 10,000 rockets and missiles capable of hitting a quarter of Israel's population, and it has continued to launch numerous armed attacks across the border.

Indeed, ever since the inception of the Palestinian *intifada* in September 2000, Hizballah has persistently tried to provoke Israel into opening a second front on its northern border. In addition to armed attacks, the terrorist organization has instigated a water dispute between Israel and Lebanon by pushing an initiative to divert water from a tributary of the Jordan River. It has fanned the flames of the *intifada* itself by delivering weapons and know-how to Palestinian terrorist groups. And it has openly propagandized for the destruction of Israel by means of its media and web outlets and through such wildly popular Hizballah-sponsored video games as *Special Force* (available in English and French as well as Arabic and Farsi), whose aim is to show "the defeat of the Israeli army and the heroic actions taken by the heroes of Islam's resistance in Lebanon."

So far, these efforts to drag Israel into war have failed. Preoccupied with their ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, and well aware that a move to disarm Hizballah would entail confronting the organization's two sponsors, Syria and Iran, the Israelis have shown little desire to reenter Lebanon. Nor is Israel the only country that has declined to engage the terrorist organization directly. Even though, prior to September 11, Hizballah had killed more Americans than any other terrorist group, the U.S., too, has preferred to focus its energies elsewhere. The name of Sheikh Hassan Nassrallah, Hizballah's fiery leader and perhaps the most popular man in the Muslim world, is all but unknown here, and while the Bush administration has closely followed Hizballah activities in the Middle East and especially its links to al Qaeda, concern has not been translated into action.

This might soon have to change. Just as in May 2000, when Hizballah defied expert opinion by re-

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fusing to enter into hibernation after Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, so today it continues to march to the beat of its own drummer, its political and military calculus influenced more by the strength of its implacable convictions than by considerations of "prudence." Together with Syria and Iran, the organization appears bent on creating a unified anti-U.S. front in the Middle East, a kind of Shiite "axis" spanning the region from Tehran to Beirut and including a number of its sectarians in newly liberated Iraq. With anti-Americanism running high in the Muslim world, the takeover of portions of Lebanon by a terror organization of global reach is becoming a pressing threat.

FORMED IN 1982 by a group of young graduates of Shiite seminaries in Iran and Iraq, Hizballah (the name means "party of God") took as its main goal the exporting of Iran's Khomeini revolution to Lebanon. Although its primary aim was to drive Israel out of Lebanon—Israeli forces had invaded the country in 1982 in order to disrupt and destroy Yasir Arafat's PLO army, which had a death grip on the south—it was not Israel but the U.S. that became the first casualty of the organization and of its weapon of choice, the suicide attack. In 1983, a Hizballah activist killed 63 people at the U.S. embassy in Beirut; another drove a truck bomb into U.S. Marines headquarters, murdering 241 American servicemen.

That was just the beginning; since the 1980's, Hizballah has gone international. Its cells have been uncovered in Europe, Southeast Asia, and West Africa. In our own hemisphere, the so-called Triple Frontier or tri-border area along the junction of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil has offered a lucrative haven for the drug and arms trafficking, smuggling, counterfeiting, and other illicit activities that now provide a major source of Hizballah's funding. And then there is North America. Prior to last December, when Ottawa banned Hizballah, Canada was another major base of fundraising, primarily through a car-theft ring. One of Nasrallah's top men, Ayub Fawzi, who also appeared on the FBI's list of 22 most wanted terrorists after 9/11, operated from Canada for several years; so did Muhammed Dbouk, head of a clandestine cell in Vancouver that bought military equipment for the organization.

In the U.S. itself, Hizballah activists enjoy, as the FBI has warned, "the capability to attempt terrorist attacks." One operative, Muhammad Hammoud, led a recently uncovered cigarette-smuggling ring in North Carolina and Michigan. A graduate of Hizballah's training camps in Lebanon, Hammoud managed to gain entry to the country using forged immigration documents; once here, he married an American woman and established a false identity. His cell purchased and sent on to Lebanon dual-use equipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, while he himself functioned as a "sleeper" terrorist, i.e., one who could easily be activated to help carry out an armed attack. Hammoud's cell was discovered by sheer luck when an off-duty police officer, working as a security guard, noticed suspicious activity at a cigarette wholesaler in North Carolina. How many others like Hammoud are living in the U.S. is impossible to know.

Even if Hizballah has not committed any overt anti-U.S. terrorist acts in several years, its fingerprints have featured prominently in such acts and in many more plots that we have managed to thwart before execution. In the mid-1990's, Hizballah was involved in an aborted attack on American targets in Europe and Singapore, as well as in the successful Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia in which nineteen American servicemen were killed. Hizballah provided training in high-impact explosives to the terrorists who carried out the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires. It also trained al-Qaeda operatives in connection with the 1998 bombing of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. This latter episode is what finally brought the U.S. government to acknowledge the magnitude of the threat posed by Hizballah, and to put it on the official terror list.

After our campaign to drive al Qaeda from Afghanistan, it was suggested by Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage that Hizballah may have become "the 'A team' of terrorists," while "al Qaeda is actually the 'B team.'" This might or might not be the case. But it is certainly true that Nassrallah's terrorists now enjoy three distinct advantages over Osama bin Laden's.

First, Hizballah possesses the single most important asset lost by al Qaeda with its expulsion from Afghanistan: control over territory. With Syrian and Lebanese acquiescence, Hizballah has carved itself a piece of real estate amounting, so far, to nearly 15 percent of Lebanon. Its fighters occupy dozens of villages, bases, and outposts, where they can conduct military training and routine patrols. Defying both the Lebanese army and the 2,500 peacekeepers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Hizballah has declared these training areas off limits, and has

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even proclaimed a no-fly zone to prevent UNIFIL from conducting its mandated daily helicopter patrols.

In Hizballahland, the movement's fighters have much more than a safe haven. Its training camps have become a hub of international terrorism, a convention center for some of the world's most dangerous men. Here they can experiment with new weapons, practice their tactics, and collaborate with fellow terrorists from groups like al Qaeda, Hamas, Ansar al-Islam, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Kurdish Workers' Party. From Lebanon, similarly, Hizballah's agents and associates can easily export their skills to destinations around the world.

The second advantage Hizballah enjoys is sophisticated weaponry. Al Qaeda's arsenal is now limited to small, easily smuggled arms. When it comes to anti-aircraft capabilities, it possesses (as far as we know) only antiquated Soviet SA-7 Strella missiles, part of roughly 50,000 that were sold to third-world countries during the cold war; such missiles—they may have figured in last November's attack on an Israeli passenger plane in Kenya—are largely ineffective against the countermeasures routinely employed by modern planes. By contrast, Hizballah has accumulated an impressive stockpile of weapons, including, as I mentioned at the outset, thousands of rockets, artillery pieces, and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. In the latter category, it has reportedly equipped itself with SA-18 missiles, whose substantially improved range and speed enable them to shoot down almost any aircraft.

Owning more weapons than it knows what to do with, Hizballah has also helped procure arms for other groups. It played a key role in the January 2002 attempt to smuggle 50 tons of weapons to the Palestinian Authority aboard the *Karine-A*. Its external-operations commander, Imad Mughniyeh, one of the world's most wanted terrorists, arranged to purchase the ship, and Mughniyeh's deputy Haj Bassem personally supervised the loading operation at the Iranian island of Kish.

How did Hizballah develop a military capability surpassing that of some Arab countries? This is where its third advantage over al Qaeda comes in—state patronage. Since the fall of the Taliban, al Qaeda has been disavowed, at least formally, by almost every country on earth, and its leaders are being hunted down. Global rejection has meant denial of training facilities, weapons, and a financial base. For Hizballah, things are quite different. From Iran it gets funding, weapons, training, and political guidance; from Syria, political clout and more weapons; and from Lebanon, tacit approval to run its mini-state and to tax the population under its control.

HIZBALLAH'S STATUS vis-à-vis each of its sponsors is different, and so is its approach. Viewing Lebanon's current political system as an aberration, the organization plans to turn that country into a satellite of Iran. The project may take many years, but Hizballah's leaders are optimistic. After all, they already control not only the entire south but also the crowded Shiite suburbs of Beirut—not to mention eleven out of the 128 seats in the Lebanese parliament. In Lebanon, Hizballah runs schools, community centers, and hospitals and operates an independent media outlet. As such, it enjoys the power to pursue its own foreign policy—which is to say, its vision of a Middle East free of Western influence.

Syria, the de-facto ruler of Lebanon, operates there through many terrorist organizations, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and different Fatah offshoots in the Palestinian refugee camps. But of all the groups under Syria's umbrella, Hizballah enjoys special privileges. It alone has integrated elements of its military units into the Syrian army in Lebanon and received weapons directly from Syria's arsenal. In return, Hizballah provides valuable services for Damascus—money laundering, weapons smuggling, drug trafficking—while also securing the allegiance of Lebanon's Shiite Muslims. Most importantly, Hizballah's ability to keep Israel's northern front hot serves Syria's purposes by constantly reminding the Israeli government and people that peace on this border will not be possible as long as Israeli tanks continue to sit on the Golan Heights.

If Syria is Hizballah's landlord, Iran is the sugar daddy who pays the rent. Hizballah's relations with Iran transcend convenience: culturally, ideologically, and politically, the two are cut from the same cloth. Like Syria, Iran provides weapons to Hizbollah, but the quality is generally superior, including Fajr-5 rockets with a range of 45 miles. Iran also supplies funds, estimated at $100 million per year, which allow Hizballah to finance its military operations as well as to buy the hearts and minds of the Lebanese population. Training and political guidance come through Iran's Revolutionary Guards, stationed in Lebanon's Beqa' valley. Finally, and most usefully, Tehran's official representatives throughout the world offer logistical support to Hizballah's overseas operations. In return, Hizballah operatives undertake various illicit missions promoting instability and strife in the world's trou-

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ble spots without further darkening Iran's image as a state sponsor of terrorism.

ONE SUCH international trouble spot is Iraq. The U.S.-led war on terrorism has put both of Hizballah's main state sponsors on the defensive. Iran, already included in President Bush's "axis of evil," is now surrounded by American forces in neighboring Afghanistan and Iraq. The noose around Syria is likewise tightening: in the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom, President Bashar Assad has found himself more isolated than ever, with U.S. forces to his east, Israel and Jordan to his south, and Turkey to his north. Had he exercised better judgment in March and April, Assad would not have allowed war materials and Islamic fighters to cross into Iraq, or have hosted fleeing Baath officials. But he has proved a reckless leader, which suggests that he is also unlikely to crack down on Hizballah, at least voluntarily. Besides, Syria is more than ever in need of Lebanon, its only territorial cushion, and Hizballah is a critical tool in enabling Damascus to maintain a grip on its neighbor.

To break out of their current isolation, Syria and Iran, together with remnants of Saddam's regime, are hoping to foment a general Islamic revolt against the U.S. occupation of Iraq, mainly using guerrilla and terror tactics similar to those faced by the U.S. in Lebanon in 1983. (In the words of Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, "Syria has a national interest in the expulsion of the invaders from Iraq.") Meanwhile, Iran has begun to recruit radical Shiite clergymen inside Iraq and to broadcast religious-tinged anti-American propaganda in Arabic. One particular theme has to do with the American occupation of the holy city of Najaf, where Ayatollah Khomeini spent years as an exile shaping his revolutionary doctrine, and where many of Hizballah's senior leaders, including Nassrallah and Sheikh Muhammad Fadlallah, the movement's founder, received their religious education.

By virtue of its success in driving the U.S. out of Beirut in the 1980's and Israel from south Lebanon in 2000, no group is better fitted to carry the banner of Iraqi resistance and "liberation" than Hizballah, and no individual better than Nassrallah. With Osama bin Laden weakened and displaced, Saddam Hussein defeated, and Yasir Arafat confined to quarters, Nassrallah remains the only Arab general in modern times who can plausibly claim to have led his people to victory in the battlefield. Under his leadership, Hizballah, a non-state actor, has prevailed where state actors failed, transforming itself from a local gang into a pan-Islamic symbol of pride, courage, perseverance, and valor.

No wonder, then, that in recent months Hizballah's leaders have shifted their focus from the "little Satan," Israel, to the "great Satan," America. Nassrallah has called for a campaign of millions to eradicate the American presence in the heart of the Arab world. "'Death to America' was, is, and will remain our slogan," he proclaimed just days before the invasion of Iraq, while Hizballah's satellite TV channel al-Manar ("Lighthouse"), steadily broadcasts music clips with lyrics like: "America is the mother of all terrorism. / Let the mother of terrorism fall. / America is the army of evil. / An invading aggressive occupying army. / There is nothing left but rifles. / There is nothing left but martyrs."

The rhetoric does not fall on deaf ears. Hizballah has already started recruiting fighters around the Muslim world as well as local political leaders and militia chiefs in Iraq itself. With the American invasion, suicide volunteers, among them hundreds of Hizballah fighters answering Nassrallah's call for "martyrdom operations," began flowing into Iraq to help Saddam's "holy war." The discovery of hundreds of bomb-laden leather jackets in an elementary school near Baghdad, each lined with several pounds of plastic high explosives laced with ball bearings, was only one sign that his call was enthusiastically heeded.

IN THE Middle East, gratitude is short-lived. While many senior Shiite clerics are indeed grateful to the U.S. for ending Saddam's dictatorship, and hope to work for a new and democratic Iraq, others have greeted the U.S. occupation with bitter silence. From this group, many volunteers will be found to re-create the Lebanese experience in Iraq. Hizballah's mode of operation has always been to deliver a blow through a proxy—fictitious groups like the Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, or anonymous individuals who preserve the deniability both of Hizballah itself and of its state sponsors. If and when the U.S. is attacked, either at home or abroad, there may not be a business card attached to the bomb.

What, then, can be done? One initiative is the Syria Accountability Act (SAA), a draft congressional bill proposing economic sanctions if Syria does not cease its sponsorship of terrorist organizations, stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, and close down its military occupation of Lebanon. Although sanctions are admittedly an instrument of limited utility, the Bush administration has so far refused to embrace this legislation

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on the grounds that it would hamper U.S. maneuverability in the region.

As for Lebanon, the official home of Hizballah and other terrorist organizations and host to some of the FBI's most wanted terrorists, it has not been held in the least accountable for misdeeds initiated on its territory. It does not suffer sanctions, and it does not appear on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. To the contrary, Lebanese leaders pocket $40 million a year in U.S. aid while brushing off demands to rein in Hizballah—"they are not terrorists but facts of resistance," in the words of Lebanese President Emile Lahoud. Would it be too much for the United States to warn that acquiescence in Hizballah's takeover of Lebanese land will eventually bring upon the Lebanese themselves another round of destruction and suffering? Or to demand that the government of Lebanon assert its sovereignty in the south in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 520, evicting all terrorist and foreign forces from the area?

Another possible mechanism for curbing Hizballah is, believe it or not, UNIFIL—but only if its mandate were changed. UN peacekeepers in Lebanon have not lifted a finger to stop Hizballah's unprovoked attacks against Israel. In fact, nowhere in UNIFIL's reports to the world body is there any mention of the thousands of rockets and missiles Hizballah has deployed or of the activities of its training bases. In its present form, UNIFIL has no function other than to obstruct Israel's efforts to defend itself. But one could imagine ways in which its annual budget of $120 million, mostly funded by American taxpayers, could be put to better use. This, however, would require a determined U.S. push to expand its responsibilities, beef up its capabilities, and demand that it fulfill, and be seen to fulfill, its official mandate of restoring international peace and security.

Other nations might also play a part. Unlike the case of al Qaeda, Hizballah leaders and activists travel the globe with relative ease. Many countries still see Hizballah as a legitimate resistance movement, and the European Union in particular has refused to include it on its list of terrorist groups. Others draw a distinction between a putatively "good" Hizballah, the charitable organization taking care of Lebanon's sick and elderly, and its less virtuous military branch commanded by Imad Mughniyeh.

Of course, a similar and no less artificial distinction is regularly drawn between the "good" Hamas and *its* military branch, the Izzedine al-Qassam brigades, or between Yasir Arafat's Fatah movement and the al-Aqsa Martyrs brigades. The suggestion in each case is that the charitable and political organization is somehow disconnected from the terrorist activity it itself initiates and sponsors. This is utter nonsense. Terrorist organizations are not cholesterol, divisible into good and bad kinds. Their benevolent activities earn the support and raise the money needed to sustain their terrorist activity, and nations that decline to ban the entire organization are only conferring on terrorists the freedom of movement they require to hit those nations harder.

DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE, sanctions, and other nonbelligerent actions can only take one so far, however. Time after time, the U.S. has had to learn the hard way that threats and ultimatums leave little impression on dictators. On the other hand, as recent events have vividly demonstrated, the U.S. *can* use military means when necessary to defend its interests and its principles, and can do so without inflicting massive casualties. Whether or not talk of "Operation Lebanese Freedom" is likely to be well received in the current international environment, the idea of armed strikes on an organization that calls day and night for martyrdom operations against the U.S. surely falls within the parameters of the Bush doctrine. At the very least, now that U.S. forces are in Iraq and control its airspace, it should be possible to intercept weapons shipments for Hizballah from Iran, and/or to lean on Turkey and Jordan to block such flights over their territory.

In the end, though, nothing short of a complete disarmament of Hizballahland will do. As Bob Graham, former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has suggested: "We should tell the Syrians that we expect them to shut down the [Hizballah] camps within x number of days, and, if they don't, we are reserving the right to shut them down ourselves." Among other advantages, such a go-it-alone campaign would be far easier to execute than any of America's recent military operations. Hizballahland is small enough to fit 400 times into Iraq and 700 times into Afghanistan, requiring very little force to clean up.

If September 11 taught us the danger of allowing terrorist organizations (like al Qaeda) to establish themselves in comfortable homes (like Afghanistan), it also reminded us that terrorists mean what they say and say what they mean, and deserve to be taken at their word. Administration officials have promised that Hizballah's "time will come," but unless we adopt an aggressive and preemptive approach to their sworn determination to bring "Death to America," that time may come too late.

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ART

On Discovering Bada Shanren

Steven C. Munson

"THE ESSENCE of art should not be judged by likeness to an object, but by the emotions and intelligence the art embodies." With their emphasis on the subjective—that is, on the primacy of the artist's sensibility—these words (as rendered by the curator Joseph Chang) have a modern ring. It is all the more surprising, then, to discover that they were not written by a late-19th or early-20th-century artist, or even by someone working in the Western tradition. Rather, they can be found in a reproduction of a now missing album of eight landscapes produced in 1693 by a Chinese painter known as Bada Shanren, the last and most famous of the dozen or more pseudonyms he used in the course of a remarkable life.

Bada Shanren was the most important painter of his day and a key figure in the history of Chinese art. Particularly since he was "rediscovered" in the late 19th century, he has continued to influence Chinese artists down to the present. Bada is well recognized in China; in 1986, his hometown of Nanchang hosted an exhibition and symposium to commemorate the 360th anniversary of his birth. Another major survey of his work, this one held at Yale in 1991 and accompanied by an international conference, did much to make him better known around the world. But except for scholars, connoisseurs, and other specialists, Bada Shanren is not yet very familiar to many Americans.

The art of Bada Shanren is currently the subject of two exhibitions in Washington, D.C., at the Freer Gallery of Art and the adjoining Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, both parts of the Smithsonian Institution. The Sackler exhibit, the smaller of the two, runs through July 27 and is called *After the Madness: The Secular Life, Art, and Imitation of Bada Shanren*. The title refers to the period in the artist's life—around 1680—when he supposedly went mad. While there are contemporaneous accounts that seem to confirm this—one report has him "suddenly laughing aloud, or crying sadly all day long. One evening he tore off his monk's robes and burned them"—some who knew him were skeptical. The reason: feigning madness was something of a time-honored practice among Chinese artists, engaged in for ulterior motives (including escaping from familial or social constraints or warding off unwanted attention from the authorities). The paintings on display at the Sackler (and the Freer, too) give no indication that the artist was other than in complete control of his faculties—unlike, say, Van Gogh, a number of whose works clearly suggest madness; but without actually being crazy, Bada could well have had a breakdown of some kind and recovered.

In any event, the Sackler show focuses on Bada's art after 1680, in particular on a comparison of certain paintings with copies made by Zhang Daqian, an important 20th-century collector and dealer and a respected painter in his own right. Seeing the originals and the forgeries side-by-side is a fascinating experience. In one case, that of a large scroll painting called *Four Geese* (1698), the curator leaves it up to the viewer to try his own hand at connoisseurship and decide which is the genuine article.

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The larger exhibition, at the Freer, is titled *In Pursuit of Heavenly Harmony: Paintings and Calligraphy by Bada Shanren*; it runs through October 26 and gives a much broader presentation of Bada's accomplishment. Indeed, according to Julian Raby, the director of both galleries, the works on exhibit at the Freer, acquired in 1998 and now on full display for the first time, have made this gallery "the most important center for the study and exhibition of Bada Shanren's art outside the People's Republic of China." The works come from the bequest of Wang Fangyu, a preeminent Bada scholar and the co-author of the monograph for the 1991 exhibition at Yale, where he taught art history; before his death in 1997, Wang Fangyu had amassed what the curator of the Freer show, Joseph Chang, calls "the best authenticated and most comprehensive selection of artworks by Bada ever assembled in private hands." Given the large number of forgeries believed to exist, and the excellence with which many have been executed, the emphasis on "best authenticated" is not misplaced. All told, there are some 30 pictorial images—from large scroll paintings to album leaves—at the Freer along with a dozen separate examples of Bada's calligraphy.

The Freer exhibit is intended to be both a tribute to Wang Fangyu (and his wife Sum Wai) and a way of making Bada's art more accessible to a wider Western public. On both counts, it has admirably succeeded. Along with the Sackler exhibit, the Freer show not only provides a marvelous introduction to the work of an extraordinary painter but also, because of the nature of Bada's achievement, grants access to an artistic tradition that may seem remote and strange to Western eyes. If the smaller Sackler show stirs an immediate appreciation of the beauty of Bada's art, and a desire to see more, the Freer exhibit helps to deepen the appreciation and, to some extent, quench the desire. But in general these are paintings one does not quickly get over seeing, not after a few hours and not after a few days, and one feels a compelling need to return.

IF THIS sounds something like a religious experience, that may not be an accident. It should be stressed that the appeal of Bada's art is first and foremost aesthetic, indeed formal, in nature; it could hardly be otherwise, since he flourished 300 years ago and in a setting that had little in common with that of the West. But before he made painting his exclusive profession, Bada spent more than 30 years as a Buddhist monk, becoming a disciple of an abbot of the Caedong (Zen) sect whom he would eventually replace. Thus his artistic and religious vocations developed in tandem, with the latter clearly influencing the spirit of the former.

Bada initially sought refuge in a Buddhist temple in the Fengxin Mountains, west of Nanchang (about 900 miles south of Beijing), in 1645, at the age of nineteen. As a descendant of the imperial family, he had been forced to flee the oncoming Manchu army, which had overthrown the Ming dynasty, seized the capital, and established the Qing dynasty (the last to rule China). As befitted someone of his background and standing, Bada received a classical Chinese education and passed the civil-service examination; he was evidently a gifted student. From an early age, he was also schooled in poetry, calligraphy, and painting, arts in which his family, including his deaf-mute father and especially his grandfather, had long excelled.

Bada himself seems to have excelled in everything he put his hand to, except for his brief, relatively late, and unhappy marriage. Little is known of this episode in his life, though there is an explicit reference to it in a calligraphic inscription he made on one of his paintings, *Crab-Apple Flowers* (*circa* 1682-84), included at the Sackler: "I was looking for a harmonious marriage, but unfortunately I met a Lady Dong, so I am still without a home." Inscriptions with personal overtones or allusions to the political catastrophe that befell China during his lifetime appear on other Bada paintings as well. They lend credence to part of the accepted interpretation of his art, which emphasizes his personal melancholy and social isolation and finds emotional and psychological counterparts to these things in his paintings. As Julian Raby elegantly puts it:

> As a painter, he developed an idiosyncratic visual vocabulary full of personal symbolism and artistic gesture that make his deceptively simple works endlessly intriguing. The lack of ornament and the seemingly guileless innocence of Bada's paintings appeal to the modern eye, but while his spontaneous, almost abstract, brushwork may appear rather playful, many paintings also reveal a troubled psychological edge to his character and an innately dark outlook on his own fortunes and the condition of the world at large.

Perhaps so. But one of the chief emotions one feels in looking at these works, along with a sense of the artist's profound seriousness, is simple unadulterated delight. "Tears are but the brimming over of a smile," Stendhal wrote, and this sentiment, or its obverse, perhaps applies to Bada. He may indeed have had a sad and lonely life, as a kind of exile in his own land. But, inscriptions aside, his paintings do not directly communicate the fact that he lived through a time in which both he and China suffered great upheaval, dislocation, and sadness. On the contrary, there is an almost other-worldly quality to his images, which, although they often seem to be of simple things—birds, rocks, trees, flowers, cats, fish—are by no means simple, either in conception or execution.

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Consider *Lotus* (*ca.* 1665), an early album of eight paintings done, like the other works in the two exhibits, with brush and ink on paper. Several things strike you when you look at these pictures: the large empty spaces untouched by ink or brush; the close-up, partial depiction of the flowers, whose forms seem to extend into the picture from beyond its edges; the varying tones (of black and gray) and density of the often somewhat blurry forms, which give a sensation of the texture not of a leaf or petal but of ink brushed onto paper in a certain way; and, finally, the odd angles at which the lotus flowers penetrate and shape the space that has been left blank. The resulting structure is so nearly abstract, and so perfectly balanced, that you imagine these album leaves could be turned upside down or sideways with little or no loss of either visual sense or pleasing effect.

One of the two catalogue essayists, referring to the *Lotus* album, writes that, "Fragmentary images give many of Bada's paintings an incomplete look, evoking a sentiment that the world is imperfect in the eyes of this former prince who was living clandestinely under a foreign regime." This strikes me as overly interpretive; the Buddhist Bada Shanren may very well have felt the world was imperfect, but there is nothing incomplete about these paintings as works of art. Indeed, they seem to say far more about his love of the natural world, as well as about the possibilities of perfection in art, than they do about his personal disillusionment.

More than anything else, Bada's work excites our visual imagination. His paintings evoke the space beyond their edges as strongly, and as acutely, as any pictures I can recall. Nor is there any need to look beyond them—say, to the tragedies of Bada's life—to fathom their "depth." That depth—if you can imagine depth extending itself horizontally and vertically, receding and pushing itself outward, and doing all this at the same time—exists in the relation Bada created between his imagery and the surrounding or interpenetrated empty space that coexists with it. This is a kind of pictorial space that I have never encountered before; it has movement, a finite quality, and yet somehow contains something infinite. It reminds me a little of the space one finds in Giacometti, but his space is palpable while Bada's is something else. One may also be tempted to think of Rothko, but his space is coterminous with his brilliant and evanescent color and is ultimately fleeting, while Bada's constantly renews itself. Rothko himself said that his paintings could not really "exist" unless someone was standing and looking at them. Bada's continue to exist in your mind's eye long after

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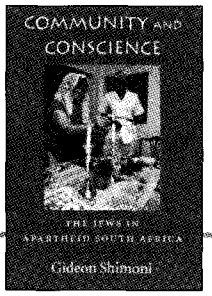

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you have left the exhibition, and one of the main reasons they linger so is the irresistible memory of the kind of space he created and the indescribable pleasure contemplation of it affords.

This space is not a representation of air or atmosphere (or light, which was not really known in Chinese painting); what it is, or rather how he created it, was suggested by Bada himself in an inscription on one of his landscapes that is cited by the curator. It refers to an ancient Chinese philosopher, Zhuangzi, whose writings Bada had studied: "[This is] what Zhuangzi meant by 'harmonizing' with a touch of heaven." Many of the paintings on display at the Freer and the Sackler evince this space, including *Peonies* (*ca.* 1699-1700), the small but extraordinarily evocative *Falling Flower* (1692), *Crouching Cat* (1699), and *Two Geese* (*ca.* 1700).

Of his strikingly spare *Landscape after Ni Zan* (*ca.* 1703-1705), Bada wrote, with a just and frank sense of his own abilities, that Ni Zan "painted like a celestial steed bounding the void . . . showing not a speck of mundane vulgarity. I drew this in my spare time." On a small painted fan with 24 tiny images of swimming fish, Bada's void becomes a swirling yet peaceful watery depth, in a composition balanced by an inscription on the upper left in which the calligraphy characters themselves are packed together like a school of fish.

These examples show how, through a minimal amount of modeling of forms, Bada created images of sublime power and beauty, by concentrating on the life of things rather than their appearance. The fact that his forms are not fully modeled is one reason his paintings look modern, by which I mean they do not seem to belong to the past, or only to the past, and can thus be more readily appreciated and enjoyed by people who have no special knowledge of calligraphy or the history of Chinese painting.

THE REDISCOVERY of the antique was a big part of both Bada's continuous self-development and of the emergence in 17th-century China of a much freer style of painting, which he pioneered. Among other things, this entailed the study of ancient calligraphy, including stone and seal carving, which made use of much more ideographic characters than those common in the everyday calligraphy of the 17th century.

Calligraphy and painting were, of course, closely related arts in both theory and practice. Bada mastered, brilliantly, the calligraphic styles of many of his greatest predecessors—indeed, writes Julian Raby, it was primarily as a calligrapher that he won renown among his contemporaries—and it was this mastery of a tradition that helped him to develop a new and highly distinctive style.

In his catalogue essay, Joseph Chang discusses one of the most magnificent paintings on display at the Freer and points to the influence of the ancient script:

> Bada's capability of handling brush and ink reached the realms of *linli qigu* (ever-changing, eccentric, and antique). . . . These "ever-changing and eccentric" qualities are best seen in Bada's large paintings of lotuses and birds, such as *Lotus and Ducks* [*ca.* 1696]. . . . The contrast of solid and loose between the long and upward-lifting lotus stalks—as if they were "written" in the manner of seal script—and the broad and hanging lotus leaves—splashes with wild-cursive strokes of multilayered ink tonality—is truly ever-changing in execution.

This quality of variability is evident as well in the landscapes done in the various styles of Chinese masters, such as *Landscape after Dong Yuan* (*ca.* 1693) and the *Combined Album of Painting and Calligraphy: Grieving for a Fallen Nation* (*ca.* 1693-1696). These works tend toward heavier modeling and have an "antique" look that differentiates them from Bada's "original" compositions. But here, too, one finds the artist's unique sense of space; an astonishing variety of brushwork, alternately firm and delicate, brisk and languid, soft and sharp; a subtle array of tonalities and contrasts in depth; and a compositional solidity and unity.

These and other works at the Freer and Sackler epitomize Bada's mature style and call to mind his use of what Chang says is the unusual term *sheshi*, meaning "to be involved in affairs." What Bada seems to have meant by this term was that he chose to be involved in the affairs of *his art*, pursuing as far as possible the technical and compositional potentialities offered by both traditional means (pen, ink, paper), formats (scroll, book, fan), and subjects (landscape and the natural world) and by examples from the past, including the primitive past.

In this preoccupation, too, as in the "unfinished" look of many of his works, there is a suggestion of the sensibility we associate with modern aesthetics. While the sources of Bada's art are far removed from those that brought Western painting to its heights in the first half of the 20th century, and while his innovations were not nearly so radical as those to which we have become comfortably accustomed, his paintings have a purity and simplicity that please and move us, strangely and deeply, today.

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MUSIC

Romancing the Score

Terry Teachout

MOST LISTENERS would agree on what the word "romantic" means when it is used to describe a piece of music. But what does it mean when used to describe the interpretive style of the artist who performs it?

The distinction is not trivial, for it is possible to play any kind of music—including the intensely subjective music of such romantic-era composers as Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt—in an infinite number of ways, some of which do not sound "romantic," just as it is possible to "romanticize" the music of pre- and post-romantic composers. Yet the music itself remains unchanged, even when it is being performed in what we may perceive as an unidiomatic way.

Does this mean that performance style is a purely arbitrary convention? Or are there right and wrong ways to play a given piece of music? It is tempting to suggest that these questions would be less vexing if musical notation were more precise, and if it were thus possible to know from looking at a score exactly how a composer intended his music to be played. But that is not the case: changes in speed and volume (dynamics) cannot be notated precisely, merely suggested. In practice, moreover, many vocalists and instrumentalists distort or disregard even the most specific directions. Sergei Rachmaninoff, for example, completely rewrote the dynamics in the funeral-march movement of Chopin's B-flat Minor Sonata, Op. 35, and countless other performers of his generation made equally dramatic changes in the pieces they played.

We know how Rachmaninoff played the Chopin B-flat Minor Sonata because he recorded it for Victor in 1930.[1] Most (though not all) of the major performers active during the first quarter of the 20th century made records that shed similar light on contemporary performance practices. Two of these artists, the pianists Vladimir de Pachmann (1848-1933) and Rudolf Serkin (1903-91), are also the subjects of newly published biographies that do almost as much as their recordings to answer the complicated question of what makes a musical performance "romantic."[2]

PACHMANN'S NAME is now known only to collectors of early piano recordings, but as late as the 1920's he was one of the most celebrated virtuosos in the world—though not for his playing. Midway through his career, he began to talk to audiences, delivering mock-serious lectures on his own greatness and muttering half-audible explanatory asides while he played. This habit became steadily more pronounced as he grew older, to the point where some observers began to doubt Pachmann's sanity.

For all his personal peculiarities, Pachmann's playing was greatly ad-

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[1] This recording is included in the Rachmaninoff volume in the *Great Pianists of the 20th Century* series (Philips 456 943-2PM2, two CD's). This CD, and the others mentioned below, can be purchased by viewing this article during the months of July and August on COMMENTARY's website, www.commentarymagazine.com.

[2] *Vladimir de Pachmann: A Piano Virtuoso's Life and Art*, by Mark Mitchell (Indiana, 231 pp., $37.95), and *Rudolf Serkin: A Life*, by Stephen Lehmann and Marion Faber (Oxford, 344 pp., $35.00).

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mired by many of the leading critics of his day, including a number of normally sober-sided observers who might reasonably have been expected to be antagonized by his erratic behavior. Samuel Langford of the *Manchester Guardian*, for instance, described a 1925 recital—one of Pachmann's last public appearances—as follows:

> Pachmann has always been unquestionably among the greatest pianists in the world. . . . One began to forget his age, for he had worked himself into a sort of youth once more, and his opulence and rapidity of execution enabled one to sense the true Pachmann, the exhaustless genius of the piano.

But his reputation went into a steep decline after his death in 1933, and the condescendingly colorful account of his platform antics included in Harold C. Schonberg's *The Great Pianists from Mozart to the Present* (1963) was for many years the only readily available description of Pachmann's playing.[3] Not until recently were his recordings transferred to CD, making it possible for modern listeners to judge his playing—and eccentricities—for themselves.[4]

The first thing one notices on listening to Pachmann's recordings of Chopin, the composer with whom he was most closely identified, is their pronounced instability of tempo. This trait can be heard to striking effect in his 1912 performance of the popular E Major Etude, Op. 10/3. In this familiar piece, a serene melody floats above an evenly undulating sixteenth-note accompaniment. No pianist ever plays these sixteenth-note patterns perfectly "straight"; instead, they are always executed with unwritten rhythmic fluctuations known as rubato. Such fluctuations are the life's blood of romantic music, and they can be heard in the playing of every modern-day pianist who has recorded the E Major Etude, from the expansively romantic Van Cliburn to the coolly contemporary Maurizio Pollini. As differently as the two men play the piece, their playing has in common a restrained application of rubato that is for the most part characteristic of postwar interpreters.

Pachmann's version of the E Major Etude, by contrast, is extreme to the point of capriciousness in its use of rubato. Not only is his playing of the accompaniment rhythmically uneven, but the overall tempo of the performance ebbs and flows to a degree that modern listeners may find exaggerated (even though Chopin's notation indicates that he wanted the piece to be played with frequent touches of rubato).

At the same time, Pachmann's playing is not "sentimental" in any conventional sense. His basic tempos, for example, are actually quite brisk—his recording is three minutes and seventeen seconds long, a minute and a half shorter than Cliburn's 1961 version—and he plays the tempestuous middle section much faster than the song-like opening and closing, in the process completely disregarding Chopin's explicit instruction that this part should be played with only "a *little* more animation."[5]

No less striking is what, for lack of a better word, might be called the "vocalized" quality of Pachmann's pianism, in which top-voice melodies are decoupled from their inner-voice accompaniments and played with great rhythmic flexibility and a singing, resonant legato, much as a soprano of the period might have sung an operatic aria, taking for granted that the conductor and orchestra would follow her lead. This quality is also on display in Pachmann's 1911 performance of the F Major Nocturne, Op. 15/1, whose melody he phrases in a wayward, seemingly improvisational manner reminiscent of a turn-of-the-century singer.

PACHMANN'S PLAYING is a relic of a lost world far removed from us in time. Born the year before Chopin died, he made his first recordings in 1907, nearly a century ago. And for all his well-attested idiosyncrasies, the salient features of his style are not uncharacteristic of other, less eccentric 19th-century performers who left behind records of their playing. The French pianist Alfred Cortot, for example, born in 1877, made a recording of the E Major Etude in 1934 that is similarly vocalized and rhythmically flexible, and also prepared a "student's edition" of the piece in which he explained that it requires "expressive merging of the rubato tempo with the musical phrasing" and "clarity of tone . . . to give the melodic line full opportunity for limpid play against a shrouded background." It would be hard to describe the romantic style of both Cortot and Pachmann more precisely than that.[6]

Such subjectivism was bound in time to fall from favor. Just as the modern movement in musical composition reacted against the hyperromantic excesses of Wagner, so did a new generation of younger performers call for a return to classicism in musical interpretation.

Rudolf Serkin, who first won fame as the recital partner and protégé of his father-in-law, the German violinist Adolf Busch, was among the most prominent of these neoclassicists. Virtually every aspect of his and Busch's styles constituted a rebellion

[3] A very different and far more sympathetic perspective on Pachmann's playing and personality is to be found in Dana Gioia's poem "An Elegy for Vladimir de Pachmann," reprinted as the epigraph to *Vladimir de Pachmann: A Piano Virtuoso's Life and Art*: "[T]he critics thought his madness/was theatrical, but the less learned /members of his audience, to whom he talked / while playing, knew the truth."

[4] *Vladimir de Pachmann, the Mythic Pianist: Recordings from 1907-1927* (Arbiter 129), the first in a planned series of CD anthologies of Pachmann's 78's, contains a representative selection of his Chopin recordings, including a spectacularly inaccurate 1927 performance of the G-flat "Black Key" Etude, Op. 10/5, on which the seventy-nine-year-old pianist can be heard discoursing volubly about his changes to Chopin's score.

[5] Cliburn's recording is available on *My Favorite Chopin* (RCA 60358-2-RG).

[6] Cortot's versions of the complete Etudes are available with his other Chopin recordings in a budget-priced boxed set (EMI Classics CZS 7 67359-2, six CD's).

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against what they took to be the self-aggrandizement of the romantic-era interpreters who had come before them. Significantly, Busch and Serkin spoke of their crusade against romantic subjectivism in moralistic terms. As Busch put it in 1927:

> Playing interestingly is nothing—anyone can do that; but playing rightly, as we can do, no one else can do that—not even us. . . . Our way of making music, Toscanini's way . . . is nevertheless the right way and the "enduring" way!

For both men, as for the similarly inclined Arturo Toscanini, the first step in playing "rightly" was to eschew the capricious, improvisational rubato that was the principal feature of romantic-era interpretation. "For any music, the pulse should remain unified, with a certain flexibility," Serkin declared, adding that any performance failing to observe this rule was "a crime." Similarly, he disdained Pachmann's delicate, sensuous tone, opting instead for a harsher sound, one evocative not of a lyric soprano but of a symphony orchestra in full cry.

Not coincidentally, Serkin devoted most of his time and energy to the Austro-German classics, playing comparatively little Chopin and Schumann, hardly any modern music, and no Liszt at all. (The seventeen solo programs he played at Carnegie Hall between 1970 and his farewell concert in 1987 were devoted exclusively to the music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Max Reger.) In this respect he resembled Artur Schnabel, though Serkin did not admire the playing of the older pianist. According to Richard Goode, one of Serkin's most successful pupils:

> He was very critical of Schnabel. He said a very interesting thing about Schnabel and [Arthur] Rubinstein, whom I'd never previously thought of in the same category. He said, "Both of them have a kind of love of self and, as you know, self-love can be very infectious."

This remark goes a long way toward explaining Serkin's self-abnegating choice of repertoire. On the rare occasions when he played Chopin in public, he almost always programmed an entire book of the Etudes or the complete Preludes, Op. 28, rather than picking and choosing a group of shorter showpieces. One of these performances, a 1948 Library of Congress recital featuring the Op. 25 Etudes, was privately recorded, and the results are uniquely revealing of Serkin's ambivalence toward romantic music, for his interpretation is deadly serious, tonally uningratiating, and rhythmically direct to the point of baldness. The effect is ascetic, even penitential—two adjectives that could never have been applied to the playing of Pachmann or Cortot.[7]

A kind of law of opposites seems to be operating here. Just as Serkin played Chopin in a way most listeners, then as now, would consider unidiomatic, romantic pianists like Rubinstein, Josef Hofmann, Benno Moiseiwitsch, and Vladimir Horowitz found the Austro-German classics strangely elusive. Their rhythmically flexible, tonally lush interpretations of middle-period Beethoven usually sound soft-centered, even spineless. To listen to these variously unsatisfying recordings is to come away wondering whether the ability to play Chopin *and* Beethoven convincingly might be mutually exclusive.

Only when a younger generation of performers began to cultivate what I have elsewhere called an "international" style of interpretation did this begin to change. In this international style, the modes of the romantic and neoclassical eras were amalgamated into a single, unified approach to interpretation.[8] Though the result is too often bland and unadventurous, its most gifted exemplars, including Cliburn, the Rumanian pianist Dinu Lipatti (1917-50), and Murray Perahia, a Serkin-influenced American pianist who also studied with Vladimir Horowitz, rank among the most gifted musicians of the 20th century.

As for Rudolf Serkin's "pure" neoclassicism, it is now as much a thing of the past as is the equally pure romanticism of Vladimir de Pachmann, and both styles survive only on recordings. Pachmann, who recorded exceptionally often for a pianist born in the mid-19th century (fourteen sessions between 1907 and 1927), was certain that his own recordings would be of the highest interest to posterity:

> I shall not be forgotten. And when your children and grandchildren ask you, "Who was this de Pachmann?" you will be able

[7] This performance can be heard on a bonus CD bound into copies of *Rudolf Serkin: A Life*. (Serkin also recorded the Chopin Preludes for Columbia in 1976, but never approved the tapes for release.)

[8] For a discussion of this phenomenon, see my article "What Killed Classical Recording?" in the May 2001 Commentary.

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to show them how he played. . . . And though they cannot see me, they will hear my voice through my music and then they will know why all the world worshipped de Pachmann.

Not so Serkin. According to his biographers, "no major instrumentalist of his time made as little of his solo repertoire available on recordings," and the reasons for this unwillingness seem clear enough in retrospect. Serkin's tone as reproduced on CD sounds hard and splintery, while his self-consciously plain interpretations, however convincing they may have been when heard in concert, do not stand up well to repeated listening.[9]

And what of Pachmann? The elaborate idiosyncrasies of his playing will no doubt mystify listeners raised on the international style, in much the same way that they might be puzzled by the rhetorical excesses of a performance by Edwin Booth or Sarah Bernhardt of a play by Shakespeare or Racine. Such excesses, however, were taken for granted in the 19th century; indeed, they were in a very real sense what romanticism was all about. By the same token, the "self-love" of which Rudolf Serkin was so suspicious is one of the principal features of Pachmann's recordings, which are as much about his personality as the music he played.

It is one thing to be puzzled by these excesses and another to be offended by them, as were Busch, Serkin, and their fellow neoclassicists. One may *prefer* the straightforward playing of Serkin to the wayward rubato of Pachmann, just as one may prefer Beethoven and Schubert to Chopin and Liszt. But to claim that one style is "right" and the other "a crime" is, quite simply, nonsensical. Moral considerations are not at stake in musical interpretation. And while it may be meaningful to say that Rachmaninoff's performance of the Chopin "Funeral March" Sonata is in some sense "incorrect," the statement is also pointless. In spite of (or because of) its deviations from Chopin's text, Rachmaninoff's playing, like Pachmann's, exerts a compulsion on the open-minded listener that is infinitely more relevant to appreciation than his comparative "incorrectness."

In the end, the presence of this compelling force is the only thing that matters, since the ambiguity of musical notation ensures that, the question of technical proficiency aside, the classics cannot be played rightly or wrongly, they can only be played more or less interestingly—and what makes an interpretation interesting is the extent to which it embodies the personality of a master interpreter. This is why, a century after the fact, connoisseurs continue to seek out the recordings of Pachmann, Rachmaninoff, Cortot, and other great performers of the romantic era. Strange though they may sound to modern ears, they are at all times compellingly, even exasperatingly personal. "Incorrect," perhaps—but never, ever boring.

[9] Serkin's playing with Busch was far more "phonogenic," and a particularly fine document of the Busch-Serkin partnership is their austere yet passionate 1941 recording of the Beethoven "Kreutzer" Sonata, currently available on CD in a transfer from 78's marred by excessive artificial reverberation (Pearl GEM 0019). Sony Classical has kept few of Serkin's solo recordings in print, but a representative sample of his post-Busch playing can be heard on three budget-priced CD's containing the Beethoven "Pathétique" and "Hammerklavier" Sonatas (Sony Classical SBK 47666), the Brahms Second Piano Concerto and Strauss *Burleske* (Sony Classical SBK 53262), and the Schumann Piano Concerto and Piano Quintet (CBS MYK 37256).

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Books in Review

Knowing the Enemy

Terror and Liberalism
by Paul Berman
Norton. 214 pp. $21.00

The Crisis of Islam:
Holy War and Unholy Terror
by Bernard Lewis
Modern Library. 184 pp. $19.95

Reviewed by
David Warren

Paul Berman is a man of the Left who wrote nostalgically about the generation of 1968 in *A Tale of Two Utopias* (1996) and has contributed essays on cultural and political themes to *Dissent*, the *New Republic*, the *American Prospect*, and the *Village Voice*. Unlike many of his fellow leftists, he is not reflexively antiwar; he has cultivated a unique activist voice on U.S. foreign policy, almost expansionist in his demand that America make good on its ideals.

From his rooftop in Brooklyn, Berman was an eyewitness to events on the morning of September 11, 2001, and he acted. After a lifetime of desultory reading on the totalitarian movements of the West—Communists and fascists and fellow travelers of many stripes—he began trawling in the Islamic bookstores of Brooklyn to learn what he could about this latest deadly challenge to decency and the liberal order. His new book, *Terror and Liberalism*, is the very personal outgrowth of this expedition, extending the thesis of a long magazine essay under the same title that he contributed to the *American Prospect* soon after the Twin Towers came down.

In the book's early pages, Berman sets down his political credentials. He was in favor of the Gulf war in 1991, and wanted Saddam Hussein removed from power at that time. But, he is at pains to show, his reasoning owed nothing to the "realist" school of former President Richard Nixon, who wrote a justification of the war on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* that Berman found cynical and shortsighted. Taking the first President Bush as a disciple of the Nixon school, Berman nevertheless supported him (if only nominally) in the first Gulf war because he passionately believed what he thought the then-President said without believing: that Saddam was a Hitler. But he still continues to relegate foreign-policy "realism" to the dustbin of 19th-century relics.

To the same category Berman also, more respectfully, consigns Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, with its belief in unalterable national characteristics and permanent frontiers between warring cultural spheres. Germany, Italy, Spain, and even Japan, Berman writes, were able to throw off dark legacies and embrace liberal ideals. Why not the world of Islam?

Of course, Islam*ism* is something else again. In *Terror and Liberalism*, Berman digs at length into the works of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian hanged for sedition by Nasser in 1966. In particular, he explores those parts of Qutb's vast, 30-volume commentary, *In the Shade of the*

David Warren *is a columnist and commentator on international affairs for the* Ottawa Citizen. *His "Lahore: or, the Islamic Gale," appeared in our February issue.*

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Qur'an, that he could find in English translation, as well as shorter, more tract-like works like *Islam: The Religion of the Future*. Berman presents Qutb as the central thinker in the 20th-century development of Islamism. He finds his works "fascinating," and struggles to get imaginatively inside a worldview in which he finds many brilliant insights and an exhilarating critique of Western modernity.

But what he also finds is a fanatical myth. And not just any myth, but another version of the *ur*-myth lurking behind all Western totalitarianisms of both Left and Right. This is the apocalyptic notion of a people of good who in a just world ought to enjoy the blessings of human existence but who have been traduced and undermined by a diabolical infestation, itself aided by external agents. Both the infestation and the agents must be rooted out, exterminated.

This, in Berman's depiction, is the essential nihilist myth that has kept presenting itself, under ever new cultural guises, as the chief rival and nemesis to the pluralist, tolerant, meliorative ethos of modern liberalism. It first surfaced in the 19th century in the romantic cult of murder and suicide that Berman dates all the way back beyond Nietzsche to Victor Hugo's play *Hernani*. Staged in 1830, this tale of an attempted assassination of the Spanish king by a romantic outlaw ends in a revolutionary suicide pact. When the play was banned (on the first night), Hugo organized a bunch of badge-wearing young bloods to parade against the bourgeois liberal censors. They called themselves the "Romantic Army." Among their descendants, Berman implies, were the Brownshirts, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and the Saddam *fedayeen*.

In short, secular Baathism and religious Islamism are but two more versions of the same apocalyptic fantasy that has manifested itself in such outwardly different but inwardly similar movements as Nazism, fascism, Francoism, Sovietism, Maoism, and the rest. The drummers change, the lyrics change, the costumes change, but in the end the enemies of liberalism all sing the same song.

With the help of Dostoevsky, Camus, and others, Berman also traces the degeneration of whatever was once still cautious or barely civilized in this myth. Anarchists, for instance, were known to call off assassinations for fear of accidentally killing innocent women and children. But by the time the airliners were flown into the World Trade Center, there had been plenty of precedents for indiscriminate slaughter. Nor are Islamists uniquely bloodthirsty. Even suicide bombings are not a Muslim innovation. Indeed, Westerners had already thought of everything; adapting the nihilist murder-suicide cult to the needs of a fanatic, postmodern Islamism did not require much imagination.

But if we are wrong to think of Osama bin Laden as representing something new under the sun, we are also wrong to imagine that we ourselves—and here Berman takes aim at the most "progressive" among us—are immune to the appeal of this fundamental challenge to liberalism. When, he writes, liberals try to excuse fundamentally irrational acts by invoking the many sins of the democratic West, liberal rationalism becomes self-subverting. The liberal drum-roll of protest against Israeli oppression of Palestinian Arabs rose *with* the tide of Palestinian suicide-bombings; what this suggests is that the terror cult excites an irrationally sympathetic response just when it strikes most lethally.

So why does Berman not end up, as the logic of his thoughts would seem to indicate, in the camp of George W. Bush and/or the neoconservatives? He does grant that the President has moved, or been carried, away from Nixon's "realism" and into a sincere championship of various truly liberal propositions, chiefly of the humanitarian variety. But in the end, the President's trumpet call is, for Berman, too uncertain. In particular, his failure to draw the European democracies into the fight against the latest nihilist enemy tells Berman more about the President's native deficiencies and confusions than about the blindness and arrogance of those democracies.

OR SOMETHING like that. At first glance, Paul Berman seems to be doing what "liberals" always do, namely, blaming the West for everything: even Islamism, as he presents it, must have a Western pedigree. But he also concedes quite a lot. While posturing against Nixon, Kissinger, and the world-weary State Department, he effectively aligns himself with the neo-Wilsonian idealism of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and the Pentagon. While cultivating a professorial distaste for the company of neoconservatives, he seems to want to fight the same wars, and possibly even some they would prefer to stay out of.

There is something a little better than cuteness in this. Berman is trying sincerely if rather clumsily to get himself into the same troop carrier with the likes of George Orwell, Sidney Hook, and Arthur Koestler: in effect, an old cold warrior, left-flank variety. He may think George W. Bush is an inarticulate moron, but does not disagree with him on any substantial point. He only wants to embed liberalism within the latest Republican triumphs, which as a ploy is infuriating and endearing at the same time.

As for his argument about what Islamism owes the West, I do not find it wildly over-ingenious, and he tries not to push it too far. He admits that Osama, Saddam, the ayatollahs, and the rest are not quite "copy-cat killers" in the footsteps of Lenin, Hitler, and Stalin, and does his best to grant them the autonomy of nuance. The trouble is that

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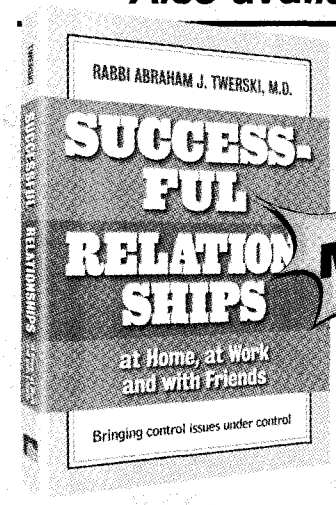
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his best is vitiated by his unfamiliarity with Islamic theology and tradition.

There are, for instance, embarrassing patches throughout his chapter on Sayyid Qutb. He does not seem to realize that the critical accounts Qutb gives of Moses, Jesus, the apostle Paul, and the early Church are not a brilliantly original exposition of history, as he claims, but conventional Muslim views. He has such curious notions as that, in Sura 5 of the Qur'an, Allah "transforms" the Jews of Medina "into apes and pigs," which suggests the magic of Circe; the received view, I believe, is that the curse was intended figuratively.

This latter point is more important than it may first appear, for it helps to explain the tone of Qutb's anti-Semitism: how, at one moment, he can allege the most improbably vast Jewish conspiracies—for instance, that the Turkish secularist Kemal Ataturk was working on Jewish instructions when he abolished the old Ottoman caliphate in 1924—and, at the next moment, forget such "facts" altogether and treat the Jews as of no consequence. This "flasher" approach to anti-Semitism goes right back to the Qur'an, and is endemic to many Muslim worldviews (note the plural). "Of course the Jews are pigs and monkeys, but it's nothing personal," might be a good way to caricature Qutb's position, and that of many others.

This is different in kind from the anti-Semitism of Christendom, which could be murderously personal even when Jews were helpless. And it is likewise different in kind from the anti-Semitism of the post-Christian fanatics—the Nazis and others—who carried it into genocide. Even when Islamic anti-Semitism came into contact with the Nazi brand and *became* truly lethal, it did so in a very Islamic and unpredictable way. The Nazis murdered the Jews systematically; the Islamists work in fits.

Such quibbling is the more necessary because this book is shot through with glibness. There are any number of things Berman has not got quite right, and there are numerous small errors suggesting impatience with checking. More substantially, the text is crawling with remarks that seem very clever at first reading but fall apart when one returns to them. It is not just that Berman's readings of Qutb and Tariq Ramadan (an Islamist who has mastered the Western multiculturalist idiom) are less than skin deep; even his account of French socialism between the wars, which seems to be one of his hobbies, has the *simplisme* of a morality play.

And it is a very secular morality play at that, because Berman is insensitive, even insensate, to religion. There may be some truth in his own metaphor that, after fascism and Communism, Islamism is another tentacle of "a single, larger monster from the deep," but not in any sense of the deep that he could mean; it is just a phrase for him. By touching on the Islamists' sometimes unacknowledged debts to modern Western thinkers, he has clinched his own point yet missed the genuine inspiration within Qutb's explosive politics. There is a little bit of St. Augustine in Qutb, of City of God versus City of Man, and Berman's line does not dangle nearly deep enough to touch it. He flatters Qutb's depth without sounding it.

TO GET a better idea of these matters, one turns instead to Bernard Lewis's latest work, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. Lewis's book is quite short—another stretching of a celebrated magazine article (the *New Yorker*, in this case), but not until it snaps. The book forms a companion to Lewis's *What Went Wrong?* (2002), and continues his project of explaining authoritatively but briefly the background to current events for the intelligent general reader. It is no more ambitious than that—no grand Fukuyamesque visions attempted—and much of it summarizes relevant material from about twenty of the author's own more scholarly and specialized works. But it is impressive in sweep, for Lewis is as acute about political developments in the last few decades as about the deeper history. His chapters on Soviet influence in the region, and on the marriage of Saudi power and Wahhabi teaching, are remarkable feats of concision.

Lewis is hardly blind to Western influences on militant Islam, as on Baathism and other forms of pan-Arabism. But he is more concerned to show how, precisely, such revolutionary ideas from the West interact with pre-existing ideas within Islam to produce often virulent combinations; and how they have bastardized Islam when they have come in contact with it. His book is unillusioned: it documents, for instance, how a genuine compassion among Muslims for the victims of Islamist terror, and genuine condemnation of the perpetrators, can co-exist with a mythic worldview that continues to hold the "Great Satan" of the U.S. and the "Little Satan" of Israel responsible for the evils that are done to them in the name of Islam.

It is especially instructive to read Lewis on Sayyid Qutb, for in five large-type pages he supplies almost everything Berman has missed in more than 40 closely spaced ones. Most usefully, he shows that even when Qutb is exclaiming about the degeneracy and debauchery he witnessed in his brief encounter with American life, he is addressing an internal audience, not an external one. America remains exotic to him, and also to his readers; they are not, contrary to Berman's suggestion, quite the hyphenated individuals wittily depicted in the novels of Salman Rushdie. Berman, like most Westerners, forms his impressions from émigrés, from fish out of water.

As Lewis's book reminds us, there is a deeper autochthony in Islamist terrorism. Both secular fascism and

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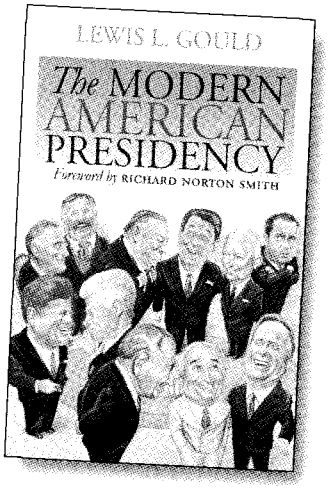
The Modern American Presidency

Lewis L. Gould

Foreword by Richard Norton Smith



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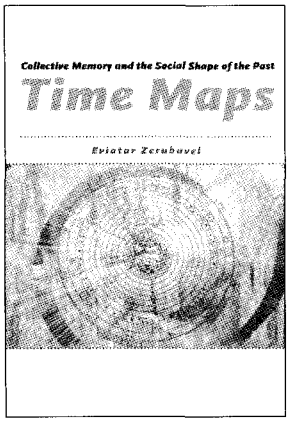

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the Christian Crusades can be read as negations of Jesus' otherworldly creed, but it is not so easy to dismiss the line that connects a religion founded in generalship and wars of conquest with modern conceptions of jihad. Lewis is decently cautious and scholarly in making these connections, and he is equally secure in assuring us that indiscriminate slaughter, or conversion at sword-point, were never part of any demonstrably Muslim doctrine, and that Islam has always taken a grim view of suicide. But he leaves us in no doubt that jihad has been, through the centuries, very seldom an expression of spiritual aspiration and very often the rationale for conquest.

BY COINCIDENCE I had just finished reading *The Crisis of Islam* when Berman arrived, and so what struck me most immediately were differences of tone and style. Lewis keeps cutting to the chase; Berman keeps cutting away. Lewis captures realities; Berman makes concessions to them. Lewis is learned to his fingertips in Islamic history, society, politics, art, and thought; Berman has read this and that. Lewis exhibits; Berman parades. There is, between them, a real difference of sobriety.

But there is a difference of intention, too. Lewis is helping all men of goodwill to understand; Berman is engaging in a polemic. The polemic is admittedly a necessary one, especially on his side of the political spectrum, even though it may be fairly redundant, and perhaps even a little distracting, for people who were in no doubt to start with that fanatical Islamism and the terrorism it supports must be resisted and finally defeated. For such people, the question is not why, but how—the same question that posed itself to the firemen who rushed into the World Trade Center. They did not have time to discuss the obvious.

In the longer struggle, we, in America and the West, are compelled to learn a lot more than we ever cared to know about the ideals and ambitions that animate the Islamic polities; and, to be sure, we are also compelled to find common cause with the best in Islam wherever we can. But it does not hurt to remember why, with all their diverse flaws, many of them clarified, and others exemplified, by Paul Berman, the traditions of the West remain the most fertile and promising in the history of the planet.

Nanobots, Etc.

Enough:
Staying Human
in an Engineered Age
by Bill McKibben
Times Books. 288 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Kevin Shapiro

IN THE emerging debate over whether to restrict technologies like cloning and genetic engineering, at least one thing is clear: nobody wants to be called a Luddite. The original Luddites were 19th-century followers of the possibly mythical Ned Ludd, who is said to have smashed two large weaving frames as a sign of resistance to the mechanization of the English textile industry. Nowadays the sobriquet is mostly derogatory, suggesting someone who opposes the development of new technology out of ignorance, religious zeal, or irrational suspicion of change.

Bill McKibben wants to stop the nascent biotechnology revolution in its tracks. But he is not, he insists in *Enough*, a Luddite. McKibben is, in fact, an archetype of what David Brooks has called the bourgeois bohemian. A leftish writer who moved to rural New York State in search of a simpler life, he worries about the environment and the loss of "traditional" values, and admits to feeling guilty about his consumerist impulses. In his previous books, he has bemoaned the supposed despoilment of our natural heritage (*The End of Nature*, 1989); warned about the cultural dangers of television (*The Age of Missing Information*, 1993); and called for a voluntary one-child policy to combat overpopulation (*Maybe One*, 1998).

But these familiar bogeymen pale in comparison with the menacing troika of technologies that, as McKibben now sees things, stand to redefine what it means to be human—and not for the better. The first of these is "germline" genetic engineering: the ability to make permanent, heritable changes in the genetic makeup of our children. When we can do this, McKibben argues, our children will cease to be human beings. They will become mere products, robbed of any opportunity for self-understanding. Thus, an athletically-enhanced boy who grows up to win a marathon will not know what to make of his achievement. As McKibben puts it,

> these new technologies show us that human meaning dangles by a far thinner thread than we had thought. What if the ending to our story has already been written, our compass already set? What if we have been programmed, or at least must suspect each time we choose a path that we have been nudged in that direction by our engineered cells? Who then *are we*?

The second if somewhat more distant threat to our identity is nanotechnology. Nanoengineered devices, built on the atomic scale, may someday be able to manipulate the very structure of molecules. Such devices would be the minuscule equivalent of the philosopher's stone, transforming lead into gold—or dirt into potatoes—and giving us near-immortality by repairing

KEVIN SHAPIRO *is a researcher in neuroscience at Harvard.*

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damage to our bodily tissues. But McKibben doubts that these alchemical nanobots will increase our happiness. What pleasure is there in eating a potato made from dirt rather than grown by a farmer? More to the point, is a person still a person if his brain cells and blood vessels are teeming with tiny robots? Forget designer children. Nanotechnology, according to McKibben, will render children obsolete.

Indeed, the last of the three technologies described in *Enough* may render us all obsolete. This is robotics, or more precisely, robotics enhanced by artificial intelligence. If we can build robots equal to us in intelligence (and McKibben considers this a certainty, given the rate at which computing power is increasing), they will be able to do anything we can do, only better. Here, too, joy and meaning will be drained from pursuits that challenge us today, like chess and science. Nor will this be lost on the robots, who might eventually decide that humans are superfluous.

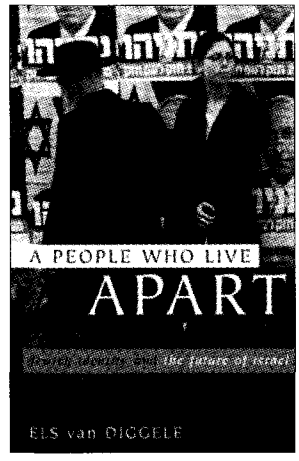
Some futurists hail such possibilities as the next step in our cultural evolution. Not McKibben. In the face of those who suggest that a "posthuman" future is all but inevitable, he points to examples of successful resistance to new technologies, like today's Amish, who eschew modern devices that would undermine their close-knit communities. We can, he insists, simply say "no, thanks" to the next scientific revolution.

Bill McKibben may not want to be called a Luddite, but he certainly sounds like one. Nor is this necessarily an insult. The Luddites were anything but mindless thugs. Most were skilled workers who feared (rightly, as it turned out) that the increased use of machinery in weaving shops would result in a flood of cheap textiles, abolishing the traditional role of handcraftsmen. The Luddites opposed not machines as such but the consequences of their growing power.

For his part, McKibben recognizes the potential benefits of technologies like germline genetic engineering, which could be used to eradicate Huntington's disease, cystic fibrosis, and other terrible maladies. But he frets that if the technology to cure genetic diseases is developed and commercialized, it will inevitably set off a biological arms race, with parents scrambling to outfit their unborn children with the latest package of genetic enhancements. If nanobots were to become widely available, they might indeed "transform the most desolate village into a Garden of Eden," but at the cost of destroying traditional ways of life that McKibben prizes.

All of this assumes, of course, that

A PEOPLE WHO LIVE APART
Jewish Identity and the Future of Israel
Els van Diggele
Translated by Jeannette Ringold



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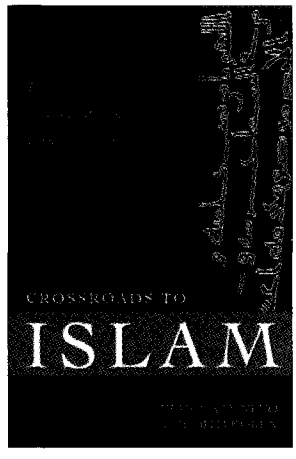

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we are close to developing such technologies, but that is far from clear. In the 1950's, futurists asserted that flying cars and computers capable of conversation were just around the corner, but even now neither of these marvels seems to be in the offing. When McKibben serves up potatoes nanoengineered from dirt, genetic enhancements that somehow "program" us to do certain things, and other fantasies of today's techno-boosters, we are well advised to add a generous dash of salt.

Still, most of the scenarios McKibben describes are at least *possible*, and we ought not face them unprepared. But he does little to prepare us. Aside from referring readers to works like Francis Fukuyama's *Our Posthuman Future* (2002) and the essays of Bill Joy and Leon Kass—writings that delve into the serious social, political, and moral issues raised by emerging technologies—McKibben provides no guiding principles. Instead, he offers us chapter upon chapter of existential hand-wringing, all of it revolving around technology's power to erode the "meaning" inherent in human existence.

What McKibben means by "meaning" is hard to say. He studiously avoids any discussion of human nature, with its taboo implications of biological determinism. "Figuring out who we are," as he puts its, seems to require contenting ourselves with the comforts we already enjoy and resisting the siren song of science. But why, exactly, would it be terrible if new clothes were made fresh every day by nanobots? Since he does not spell out answers to such questions, one can only conclude that his objections are for the most part aesthetic rather than rational. Why should anyone care, however, whether Bill McKibben takes satisfaction in doing his own laundry?

True, some of the scenarios envisioned in *Enough* are genuinely frightening, and it is tempting to argue that, no matter how far-fetched they may seem, we should squelch even the *possibility* of, for example, a genetic caste system or (à la *The Matrix Reloaded*) the subjugation of humanity to artificial overlords. McKibben himself sees technology as a Pandora's box; once we open it, we will not be able to stop what comes out. But why not? For all of his exhortations about the imperative to "choose life as we've always known it," McKibben seems to have little faith in our collective ability to recognize the moral red lines we will surely encounter.

The growth of technology need not radically change who we are or how we see ourselves. Some people will eschew the fruits of science, just as some people today shun cars, television, and genetically modified foods. Most people will assimilate those novelties that they find useful, pleasant, and safe. As a society, nothing but inertia prevents us from developing laws and regulatory mechanisms that will make it possible for Bill McKibben to continue pursuing his tastes while the rest of us, within the bounds of a democratic consensus, pursue ours.

Busting the Monopoly

Breaking Free:
Public School Lessons and the Imperative of School Choice
by Sol Stern
Encounter. 230 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Jonathan Kay

FOR YEARS, opponents of school vouchers had it easy. Rather than defend the educational status quo in America's inner cities—a tall

JONATHAN KAY *is editorials editor of the* National Post *of Toronto.*

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order—they could retreat to the First Amendment, claiming that it blocked the disbursement of public funds to the mostly religious private schools within the reach of low-income voucher recipients. This tactic was especially useful for Democratic politicians eager to dodge an issue that pits one of the party's key constituencies (teachers' unions) against another (the urban poor).

But in June 2002, everything changed. In a much-anticipated decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Cleveland's voucher program, despite its heavy reliance on private religious schools. Because parents were free to choose secular schools as well, Cleveland's program, the Justices ruled, was "neutral in all respects toward religion" and perfectly consistent with the First Amendment. The decision has opened the way for a revolution in education policy—a revolution, as we learn in Sol Stern's *Breaking Free*, that cannot come soon enough.

The enemies of school choice typically cast proponents of reform as right-wing ideologues, opposed in principle to public education. But the label does not stick to Stern. A former 1960's radical and now a contributing editor of the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*, Stern grew up in a five-story South Bronx walk-up and has fond memories of his own public-school education. Unlike many of the politicians and administrators who defend the current system, he and his wife (herself a public-school teacher) sent their own children to public schools. In the end, it was not free-market ideology that drove Stern to embrace school choice but rather his first-hand observations of both the failings of public education in New York City and the attractive alternatives available at modestly endowed private schools.

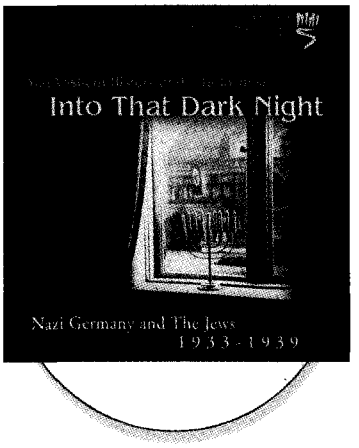
Stern traces the rot in New York City's public schools to multiple sources, from the Soviet-style bureaucracy that paralyzes the Board of Education to the local and state politicians whose only response to low test scores is to try to wring ever more money from the public coffers. But he reserves the lion's share of blame for the teachers' unions, whose hold on the system deprives even the best-intentioned administrators of the freedom they need to manage resources and personnel.

According to a University of Tennessee study cited by Stern, the quality of classroom instruction affects student performance more than any other variable. Yet in New York, as in other big urban school systems, firing an incompetent teacher is almost impossible, thanks to the restrictions contained in the city's 200-page contract with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the dominant local union. Teachers typically receive tenure after only three years, and, when faced with disciplinary proceedings or dismissal, can delay any action by exploiting elaborate grievance mechanisms.

Moreover, when hiring new staff, New York's public-school principals are often prohibited from recruiting outside the system. Instead, they must accept transfers from other schools on the basis of seniority or, when the institution is deemed insufficiently "diverse," race. Because the union contract does not allow principals to interview transferred teachers or see their personnel files, the most dysfunctional members of the UFT get shuffled from school to school—a practice administrators call "passing the lemons."

At the highly regarded New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies, Stern reports, it took years for the principal to get rid of a

Into That Dark Night



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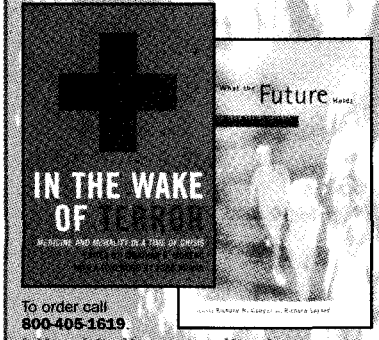

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teacher who had verbally and physically abused his students. At Robert Wagner Junior High School, an outstanding French teacher who had trained in Paris was pushed out of her job by an eccentric veteran who regularly fell asleep in class. At the elite Stuyvesant High School, a seventy-four-year-old math teacher was so incompetent that officials forced him to sit in on other math courses at the school. Meanwhile, a rookie teacher who had coached the Romanian national math team and published papers in professional journals struggled to remain on the payroll. "The process," Stern writes, "resembles a longshoremen's hiring hall of the 1950's."

STERN FOUND a world of difference when he began visiting New York City's Catholic schools. Not only, contrary to widespread stereotype, have nuns given way to laymen at most of these institutions, but their principals enjoy far more flexibility to hire and fire than do their public-school counterparts. Such discretion, Stern believes, goes a long way to explaining why, with less than *half* the public system's per-student budget, Catholic schools get dramatically better academic results, especially with minority children.

Stern's best example involves a New York philanthropist named Charles Benenson, who a few years ago "adopted" a group of 8th-grade students at P.S. 44 in the South Bronx, offering to pay full tuition for any of them who wished to attend a Catholic high school. Of the 60 eligible students, 22 accepted Benenson's offer, and twenty of these eventually went on to college. Of the 38 who chose to stay in the public school system, by contrast, only two made the jump to higher education.

Stern recognizes that vouchers can be used at other sorts of schools as well, but he is undaunted by the prospect of the less mainstream alternatives that some parents may choose. When he visited Milwaukee, home to the country's largest publicly supported voucher program, he found private schools that "ran the gamut from an evangelical Christian academy to an independent Catholic high school to a secular elementary school with a Hispanic cultural theme." In each case, the three R's remained the focus. Voucher systems, Stern suggests, force schools to respond to the demands of parents, and principals who forsake instruction in basic skills soon find their classrooms empty.

Equally impressive is the influence that the Milwaukee program has had on that city's wider educational system. When vouchers were first introduced there in 1991, resistance was fierce. But now, Stern notes, with some 12,000 students using vouchers to attend secular and religious schools, "the public consensus for school choice is . . . as deep and wide in Milwaukee as it ever was for an exclusive public-education system." As for the public schools themselves, they are now led by reformers determined to respond to the challenge of vouchers, and have registered notable improvement in recent years.

IT IS easy to see why the teachers' unions and their political allies remain so adamantly opposed to vouchers. School choice would bring accountability and change, threatening a long-standing monopoly and the cushy union contracts that sustain it. Despite last year's Supreme Court decision, the battle for vouchers will certainly rage on.

But with positive evidence piling up in Milwaukee and Cleveland, the anti-voucher camp is on the defensive as never before. Democratic candidates may receive crucial support from the teachers' unions—more than $20 million in contributions during the 2000 election cycle alone—but the proponents of school choice increasingly consist of organized groups of low-income

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blacks and Hispanics, people whom the Democratic party purports to champion. As Sol Stern eloquently attests, this is one clash of interests in which the difference will be difficult to split.

Divine Strangers

The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible
by James L. Kugel
Free Press. 270 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Noah Millman

In an earlier book, the widely praised *The Bible As It Was* (1998),* James L. Kugel, a professor of Hebrew literature at Harvard, drilled down through centuries of interpretation and commentary to reexpose the mental world of the early rabbis and the fathers of the Christian church, the first systematic readers of the Bible, whose understandings of the text still shape our own sense of what the Bible means. Part of Kugel's objective was to prove that the text itself is a creature of interpretation, shaped and ordered by generations of authoritative readers. Now, in *The God of Old*, Kugel digs even deeper, not so much drilling down as attempting to strip away the interpretive framework entirely. His purpose is nothing less than to read Scripture with entirely fresh eyes, and thereby to recover some idea of what God meant not to readers of the 1st century C.E. but to those alive at the time of the Bible's composition.

The God of old that is revealed by this exercise is, Kugel is convinced, quite alien to modern conceptions of Him. Thus, where we tend to think of God as all-powerful, all-knowing, abstract, remote, and pure, Kugel's God of old emerges as intimate, physically manifest, and moved by human suffering. And if He is strange to us, He was also strange in His own time, starkly different from the gods roundabout—different not in His refusal to be seen but in His refusal to be seen as other than Himself, in His own person.

Each chapter of this book is structured around a different trope or characteristic of the text that, for Kugel, illuminates something essential about the Bible's original outlook on God and His relation to man. Reading the stories of Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah, and a number of Psalms, Kugel points out, for example, that whereas we moderns (like the medievals before us) are spiritual seekers, questing after the divine, the characters of the Bible (including the Psalmist) are sought *by* God. (By the time of the writing of the book of Jonah, the reluctance of a prophet called by the Lord was a sufficiently shopworn motif that it could serve as the basis for sublime satire.) A later chapter focuses on the notion of "the cry of the victim"—a biblical trope for the arousal of God's compassion, a prelude to the advent of God's justice (and vengeance on evildoers). The final two chapters focus on the "starkness" of the moral world that God inhabits, a world of righteous and wicked, good and evil, black and white—in short, not the world of our everyday lives but one we are suddenly forced to become aware of whenever we connect with this God-reality.

All of these discrete observations about the biblical text function as illustrations of the alienness, or strangeness, of the God of old, a theme that is argued most fully in Kugel's first and third chapters. The former focuses on the appearances of God to ordinary men and women; the latter is about the Bible's strict iconoclasm.

Noah Millman *writes* Gideon's Blog *(www.gideonsblog.blogspot.com).*

*Reviewed by Hillel Halkin in the April 1998 Commentary—Ed.

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Whereas we tend to think of God as a transcendent being, without form or substance, in the biblical text He appears a number of times like a normal man. In these scenes, the human participants do not even realize at first that it is God they are dealing with. Examples include Joshua's encounter with an armed man upon entering the Land of Israel; the annunciation of Samson's birth to his mother and father; the visit to Abraham by three strangers who announce the birth of Isaac; and Jacob's famous wrestling with an unseen and unnamed being during the night before his reunion with his brother, Esau.

In each of these cases, a stranger appears and is initially taken to be an ordinary man (Kugel terms this the "moment of confusion"). In the course of conversation, it becomes clear that what appears to be a man is in fact an agent of the Lord (or the Lord Himself), and when this recognition dawns on the human interlocutor, he or she is typically stricken not with wonder or surprise but with fear—fear of divine retribution for seeing the face of God.

Kugel is at pains to disarm the reader's instinctive response—that these stories are not about God but about angels. As he points out, in the biblical text the "angels" are not named (unlike in the well-developed literature on angels of the Second Temple and medieval periods), and there is considerable ambiguity about whether the voices of God's messengers can be distinguished from God's own. The point is that the God of old is not some omnipresent, bodiless spirit, and not even invisible. Rather, He appears just like you and me—when He chooses to appear. Like Henry V among his soldiers, God is walking about the earth incognito. At any moment, you might meet a stranger, and he could turn out to be a messenger of God—or God Himself.

This highly anthropomorphic understanding would seem to undercut, or at least make problematic, the repeated biblical injunctions against divine images. Perhaps, then, those prohibitions are a later addition? Refreshingly, this is not at all the tack Kugel takes; biblical iconoclasm, he affirms, goes all the way down. Rather, the prohibition against images of God stems from an "empty-space iconography." In the place where, in the surrounding pagan culture, an idol of the god would sit, God himself sits in the Bible (God is described, for example, as enthroned on the wings of the cherubim above the ark of the covenant). To set a man-made image in His place would be to usurp a fundamental divine prerogative: to appear to us as and when *He* chooses.

This also helps us to understand the biblical polemic against idolatry. What the Bible stresses, Kugel reminds us, is that idols, made by human hands of wood and stone and gold, cannot possibly *be* gods. To modern critics, this has often seemed an unworthy and condescending point: surely the idols were *never* understood to be gods themselves, but rather only symbols of the gods, or means of gaining access to them. Norman Podhoretz defends the biblical view very powerfully in his recent book *The Prophets*, and Kugel buttresses the case by quoting here a number of texts from Mesopotamia that affirm the accuracy of the biblical understanding; to their worshippers, the idols *were* the gods themselves, which is exactly why the Bible's condemnation of idolatry is so vehement.

This last topic is itself so strange that one yearns for a fuller investigation: in an ancient Near Eastern environment dominated by such different ideas about the nature of divine reality, how did something as unlikely as biblical monotheism take root? But while *The God of Old* is rooted in history, Kugel's ultimate aim seems to be something more subjective. He adopts a personal approach to his material, one that is both refreshing and mildly frustrating. It is refreshing because one really does feel as if Kugel is reading the Bible anew, as though it were a surprising book even to him and not a text that by now he must know half by heart. And it is frustrating because one is never really sure about where his interpretive method is taking him, whether he is advancing a historical thesis about the nature of Israelite belief, doing literary criticism, or following an essentially religious impulse.

In the end, I suspect, Kugel is animated less by a desire to explain a lost culture than to get to "the bottom" (as he himself puts it) of something more essential: the true nature of God, which he believes is lost to us as moderns. I wonder a little, though, about the "us" he has in mind. The stark language of black and white, righteous and wicked, that Kugel sees as characteristic of the biblical view of reality once one's "eyes [have been] opened" by God—how foreign is this language to, for example, our current President? The Psalmist's imploring and highly intimate cry to God in his hour of distress, never thinking to want to come close to God but only wanting God to come close enough to hear and help—how foreign is this emotion to, say, Tevye the dairyman in Sholem Aleichem's stories? The rejection of the "sophistication" of Babylon, which Kugel sees as part of the background to biblical iconoclasm—how foreign is this idea to any of John Calvin's spiritual descendants?

Still, whether or not we remain closer in our understanding of the God of old than Kugel gives us credit for, it is a rare pleasure to follow him in his detective work. It is not easy to escape the history of interpretation and read an ancient book afresh. Paradoxically, the

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Summer 2003, Number 152

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achievement is all the greater in the case of someone so knowledgeable, so deeply immersed, as James Kugel. It is enormously encouraging to find that a scholar's robes need not encumber one in tunneling down to the bottom of things, or at least as far as one can go.

Label Fables

What Liberal Media?
The Truth About *Bias* and the News
by Eric Alterman
Basic. 322 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
George Russell

Eric Alterman, the vociferous media critic of the *Nation* and an online commentator for MSNBC.com, has for years now been peddling a pretty straightforward theory about the American press. It is, he believes, under the control of venal, expanding corporations, and its best-known practitioners are either conservative fat cats spoon-fed by corporate interests or others so intimidated by those interests that they will not contest the right-wing agenda. The public face of the whole arrangement is a new media elite—Alterman dubs it the "punditocracy"—dominated by the likes of George Will, William Kristol, Morton Kondrake, and Bill O'Reilly.

In *What Liberal Media?*, Alterman has extended his basic analysis still further. As his subtitle ("The Truth About *Bias* and the News") explicitly suggests, he is taking aim at works like Bernard Goldberg's *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*, Anne Coulter's *Slander*, and other broadsides arguing that the national press is in fact dominated by a *liberal* media elite. Nonsense, says Alterman. The idea of a liberal-controlled media is no more than a "useful myth," propagated by conservatives to conceal the extent to which they themselves have come to gain control. Indeed, he writes, "Liberals are fighting a near-hopeless battle in which they are enormously outmatched by most measures."

Worse, the liberals have largely capitulated: thanks to the "conservative colonization of the so-called 'center'" of American political debate, "even the genuine liberal media [are] not so liberal" any longer. Alterman points not just to the roster of conservative commentators on Fox, MSNBC, and CNN but to the supposed transformation of the once-liberal *New Republic* (the *Nation*'s competitor) into a conservative mouthpiece and the alleged rightward trend of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. How else explain what Alterman characterizes as the press's obsessively upbeat reports on the booming dot-com economy of the 1990's, or its failure either to foresee such disasters as the Enron fiasco or aggressively to pursue conflict-of-interest allegations involving the Bush White House and the Texas oil industry? Even more sinister, today's conservatized media fully acquiesced both in the impeachment of President Bill Clinton and in the Supreme Court judgment that upheld the presidential election of George W. Bush—two actions that Alterman considers illegal and unconstitutional.

Alterman's bilious book may provide a certain entertainment value for spectators of the East Coast media mud-wrestling circuit. But the striking thing about his arguments is how pallid and contradictory they are. While expatiating at length about the rise of populist commentators on cable TV, he is forced to concede that broadcast news, which was the object of Bernard Goldberg's analysis in *Bias*, still enjoys ten times the audience of all the major cable-news networks combined. He resolves this glaring inconsistency by asserting, without any real supporting evidence, that "[w]hile a great number of people do not actually watch those [cable] shows, the rest of the media does, and that gives them a degree of influence well beyond their numbers." Well, maybe, and maybe not—but in neither case have we learned anything about the actual bias, if any, of broadcast news.

Similarly with Alterman's contention that "even the genuine liberal media," in particular the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, are "not so liberal" these days. From the pages of the "allegedly liberal" *Washington Post* he offers selected citations from Howard Kurtz, the paper's media critic, whom Alterman accuses of "flacking for Bush." As for the *Times*, Alterman adduces a one-time complaint by Howell Raines, now (but not then) the paper's executive editor, to the effect that *Times* reporters were too infatuated with then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton.

Occasionally, if inadvertently, Alterman even provides evidence against himself. Thus he writes that, on social issues, "the overall flavor of elite media reporting favors gun control, campaign-finance reform, gay rights, and the environmental movement." Then he adds, lamely: "but I do not find this bias as overwhelming as some conservative critics do." Only right-wing bias, apparently, counts as *real* bias.

If "bias" turns out to be a slippery concept for Alterman, "liberal" is made of India rubber. Basically, what he seems to mean by the term is someone like himself—which is to say, not so much a liberal, the label he incessantly and misleading applies to himself, as a committed leftist. True, Alterman is careful to distinguish his politics from that of others farther to his Left—for example, Alexander Cockburn, whose

George Russell, *who has written on politics and economics for* Commentary, *is a former international editor of* Time.

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column in the *Nation* once offered spirited defenses of Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—but he conspicuously prides himself on the acolyte relationship he once enjoyed with the late I.F. Stone, Old Left muckraker par excellence, as well as his friendship with the New Left sociologist-journalist Todd Gitlin. The latter, indeed, is singled out as the major intellectual influence on his book: "I calculate my debt to [Gitlin] as unpayable."

The effect of Alterman's skewed political taxonomy is to push almost everybody in the media to the Right: with leftists like Stone, Gitlin, and Alterman himself reconfigured as liberals, liberals can be conveniently relabeled as conservatives, and conservatives fingered as right-wingers or extreme right-wingers. In an interesting bit of dialectics, Alterman even describes the middle-of-the-road political columnist David Broder as a conservative because Broder calls *himself* a "centrist."

Alterman does have one thing right: there is indeed a much more energetic conservative voice in the U.S. national media than there was a quarter-century ago. But this is not because of some covert takeover by Rupert Murdoch or Richard Mellon Scaife. It is because of the widespread, decades-long recoil, including among many liberals, from the excesses of the New Left. Nor is evidence of this recoil limited to the media, which if anything adjusted to it only slowly and belatedly. Ever since the days of Jimmy Carter, the radicalized version of liberalism that gained so deep a hold during the Vietnam war, and that lives on as the "liberal" ideal in the perception of Eric Alterman, has been on the defensive in American electoral politics. There is no other way to explain the election and especially the re-election of Bill Clinton, who, for all his contortions, evasions, and dissimulations, was able to present himself successfully to the voting public as an anti-New Left, anti-McGovernite Democrat.

In short, liberalism has not been mugged by a conservative-driven conspiracy; it is still struggling to recover from the mugging that leftists like Alterman, and their allies who to this day control significant strongholds within the Democratic party, are hoping to administer one more time. Anyone still needing to be convinced of the New Left's lingering grip has only to watch a rerun of the most recent debate among the current crop of Democratic presidential contenders—with or without critical comments from any member in good standing of the vast right-wing punditocracy.

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Democracy as a New International Norm

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Critics of the American-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq cited the violation of state sovereignty as their chief concern. Invoking the United Nations Charter, opponents of these wars warned that American violation of Afghan and Iraqi sovereignty was illegal, immoral, and threatening to international order.

Forty years ago, these defenders of sovereignty would have been promoting sovereignty as a powerful battering ram for destroying empires and undermining the legitimacy of colonization. Eventually, empire became an illegitimate and extinct form of government; the hope was that acquiring state sovereignty would be the first step toward popular sovereignty. People living in colonies could choose their rulers only after shedding their colonial masters. Decolonization and democratization were to go hand in hand.

Today, however, the champions of sovereignty have become the conservatives. We should respect sovereignty, but it should not trump all other norms all the time. Defending Afghanistan's state sovereignty in 2001 or Iraq's in 2003 meant defending the wretched Taliban and Saddam Hussein. Both the Taliban and Hussein seized "sovereignty" by using brutal force.

In speeches justifying these wars, President George W. Bush proposed a liberty doctrine, which places the sovereignty of individuals above the sovereignty of the state. According to Bush, the sovereignty of regimes elected by their people cannot be violated. But those regimes not so constituted are illegitimate. **Like those who embraced sovereignty as the intellectual counter to empire a half century ago, Bush embraces liberty as a weapon against dictatorship.**

This liberty doctrine is not new. American presidents have sporadically deployed armed force to promote liberty in international politics. With his decisive actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush has given new impetus to the idea of promoting democratic regime change abroad.

Bush actively promoted democratic regime change in places ruled by dictators' threatening the United States. He did not start by dethroning despots loyal to American interests. The real test of his commitment to this doctrine will be his passion for deploying *nonmilitary* means for the cause of liberty in places such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Russia.

The American people are unlikely to support another preemptive war in the name of democracy Even if Bush remains committed to this new doctrine, others in his administration, in his party, on Capitol Hill, and in other strategic countries are less interested in the project. **As the going gets rough in Iraq and budgets deficits bloat in this country, the president may be tempted to let his doctrine of liberty morph into a smaller doctrine of stability.**

Such a reversal, however, will vindicate the champions of sovereignty and delegitimize the American-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. President Bush, therefore, must back up his rhetoric with long-term strategies for securing democracy. If he fails, these wars will have been wasted opportunities and be remembered instead as examples of using U.S military might for U.S. material gain. If Bush stays the course and builds a bipartisan domestic coalition, then just maybe—forty years down the road—*dictatorship* will follow the same fate as *empire* and become an extinct form of government.

— *Michael McFaul*

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